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RECORDS

OF

SHELLEY, BYRON, AND THE AUTHOR.

RECORDS OF

SHELLEY, BYRON,

AND THE AUTHOR.

BY

EDWARD JOHN TRELAWNY.

VOL. I.

LONDON
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PREFACE.

"No living poet ever arrived at the fulness of his fame; the jury which sits in judgment upon a poet, belonging as he does to all time, must be composed of his peers: it must be impannelled by Time from the selectest of the wise of many generations."—SHELLEY'S *Defence of Poetry*.

"There they saw a man clothed in white, and two men, Prejudice and Ill-will, continually casting dirt upon him. Now behold the dirt, whatsoever they cast at him, would in a little time fall off again, and his garments would look as clear as if no dirt had been cast thereat."—*Pilgrim's Progress*.

THESE two men who have left a stamp on the annals of our literature, Shelley and Byron, will interest a sect who, without priests or temples, believe in the divinity of the Muses and worship them. They alone will appreciate these records, and for them I am induced to state particulars which otherwise would die with me.

If our literature were confined to statistics and dry facts, it would be eternal winter. All our pains and aches and misadventures are dry facts, and all

our pleasures spring from our imagination, which, like the sun, adorns everything. The poets create; they fill us with illusions which only Death proves delusions.

Our libraries are crammed with lives of distinguished men, and yet how rare it is to get a glimpse of the real man as he was in life. It is like unrolling an Egyptian mummy, wrapped in countless cerecloths and containing nothing but dry bones. In my brief records, first issued in 1858 and now re-issued with very large augmentations, I have endeavoured to portray men as men, as they were in their every-day lives. In public life men say and do the same things, and are as difficult to distinguish one from the other as sheep. Their writings are open to all the world; individual censure or praise should go for nothing.

Few, if any, can look backward on their lives with satisfaction. Hitherto the highest mental attainments have proved incompatible with that which everyone is seeking—Happiness. Gray says:—

> "When ignorance is bliss,
> 'Tis folly to be wise."

The happiest human animals I have known bore the strongest affinity to house-dogs—satisfied with food and shelter, and only disturbed at the approach of beggary and rags, with stagnant brains and active instincts.

I knew Shelley the last year of his life, and Byron the last three years of his life. I was on the most intimate terms with both, and saw them almost every day. On my return to England after Shelley's death, I became more or less intimate with all the friends whom Shelley had in England, and I continued to know Mrs. Shelley till her death.

That young men fresh from College and inflated with records of Greek and Roman history should rail at our humdrum life, and dissent from the institutions which had reduced us to this state, is no uncommon occurrence; but when they come in contact with the world these elevated notions are quickly rubbed off. It was not so with Shelley. Beginning at Oxford to question all things that were established in State and Church from time immemorial was considered by the orthodox as unprecedented audacity, and his being expelled

from College and cast off from all his family, a just punishment. But the young reformer, with untamed energy of mind and body, fearlessly pursued his erratic course. As the pillory and imprisonment had been foolishly laid aside, there was no ready remedy to check the blasphemy spreading like a pestilence throughout the land.

If authors write their own lives, or if publishers get lives written of them, they are so anxious the author should cut a good figure that they sacrifice everything for that one object. They may tell the truth, but not the whole truth. It was so in Byron's memoirs written by himself. If Shelley had undertaken the same task, he would not have mentioned himself; he never did allude to himself, he ignored self. What the orthodox wrote against him was brief, and bitter; that soothes our self-complacency, and so we read it. If praise were as brief we could endure it; but to make an idol of a man, endowing him with every virtue, and declaring him infallible and guiltless of all human frailties, as a small sect of enthusiasts now do in chapter after chapter of eulogium, is nauseous and repulsive to every well-constituted mind. When

Shelley was alive, fanatics have asked me if he was not the worst of men; now he is dead, another set of fanatics ask me if he was not perfect.

Shelley never was a boy in mind: whilst they of his age were playing marbles, he was reading. His mental hunger for knowledge was insatiable—no one ever saw him without a book in his hand or pocket.

At Eton, after an illness, the doctor who attended him took a liking to him, and Shelley borrowed his medical books and was deeply interested in chemistry from that time, and, unlike doctors, he experimented with some of the drugs on himself. The power of laudanum to soothe pain and give rest especially delighted him; he was cautioned, and knew it was wrong; the seductive power of that drug retained a hold on him during the rest of his life, used with extreme caution at first and at long intervals. People who take to opiates are enslaved and never abandon them; these may be traced in some of Shelley's flights of imagination, and fancies of supernatural appearances. On one occasion in London, and again in Italy, he so over-dosed himself that his life was only saved by those measures that are used to counteract the drug; but it must

not be thought that, like De Quincey and many others, he habitually used it: he only took it on rare occasions, when in deep dejection. He was impatient of remonstrance, and so made a mystery of it. The effect of opiates is to deaden pain, but they benumb the vital powers and derange our vital organs; with Shelley they caused spasms. The professor of anatomy at the University of Pisa, Vaccà, was renowned for his skill in surgery and medicine, and he came to the conclusion that Shelley was drugging himself, and earnestly interdicted medicine in all its forms; he said that Shelley was perfectly well constituted and of a healthy and vigorous frame—he recommended his varying his diet. I often saw him in a state of nudity, and he always reminded me of a young Indian, strong-limbed and vigorous, and there were few men who would walk on broken ground at the pace he kept up; he beat us all in walking, and barring drugs and accidents, he might have lived as long as his father—to ninety.

Those desirous of knowing what Shelley really was in his natural state and habits, will find it in Jefferson Hogg's book, and in no other that I have seen. Hogg has painted him exactly as I knew

him: his is the only written likeness that I have ever read of him; at the same time it is necessary to know that Hogg despised poetry, he thought it all nonsense, and barely tolerated Shakespeare. When I asked him why he did not continue the Life, he said, "Those who asked me to write it did not want a likeness of the poet as he was, but as they thought he should be; there are literary men who undertake such jobs; Tom Moore and others, who compile Lives and will say anything that is desired; they would introduce their man as a heathen deity, with a flourish of trumpets, a big drum, and mad poets dancing, the muses singing, and the poet in a triumphal car, covered with spangles, and crowned with tinsel. I don't puff: I described him as he was, and they were shocked. It was his rare talents as a scholar that drew me to him. The greatest men are those who composed our laws and the judges who administer them, and if Shelley had put all his mind into the study of the law, instead of writing nonsensical rhapsodies, he would have been a great benefactor to the world, for he had the most acute intellect of any man I ever knew." This being Hogg's idiosyncrasy—contempt of poets

—it is unnecessary to say his criticism of Shelley's poetry was of no value; but what he says of the poet as a man is perfectly true, and so, valuable.

Leigh Hunt often said that he was the "dearest" friend Shelley had; I believe he was the most "costly." His theory was that between friends everything should be in common; he said you could not do your friend a greater favour than constitute him your banker, and that he could receive no greater pleasure than answering your drafts: as Leigh Hunt had an ailing wife and seven children, those drafts were frequent. Mrs. Shelley's father, Godwin, was another "dear" friend; his theory was that a man, labouring as he did for the advancement of knowledge, should be supported by those who agreed with the justness of his views. These two dear friends being heavily in debt, the poet had not the means of paying those debts, but the worldly philosopher, Godwin, having ascertained the poet's exact pecuniary position, as the heir of an entailed estate, suggested to him the antedating his inheritance, by raising money on post-obit bonds, and satisfied Shelley as to the expediency of so doing. The poet, always prepared for martyrdom, assented,

and Godwin found the ready means of executing the project. Money was raised at cent. per cent.; both his dear friends' debts were paid. But experience proves that this practice is not effective: those who are in the habit of allowing their expenses to exceed their earnings will not alter those habits whilst they have credit, and the debts of these claimants being paid their credit was strengthened. Shelley repeated the process in vain. Besides these dear friends, Shelley had less costly friends, who dipped their hands into his purse.

Borrowers remain borrowers as long as they can find lenders, and if this small sample of communism became general, it would rapidly lead us back to a primitive state. We all dislike work, and we are only supported in our labour by the hope of rest; but with a general system of communism there would be no urgent stimulant to compel us to work; probably we should return to cannibalism until a new beginning was made of civilization.

When Shelley had a son and heir he doubted his right to pauperize him; of himself he thought nothing, but he doubted his right to give away his son's

inheritance, and so he stopped that ruinous system of post-obits, but he continued to the last to keep for himself only what was absolutely necessary, and to bestow the rest on his dear friends. Giving money without well considered, specific, and well defined objects is always foolish. It was fortunate Shelley had so few friends, for with the exception of Jefferson Hogg and Horace Smith they all used him as their purse. Schoolboys have an apt saying, if they get hold of a generous, open-handed boy, "What's yours is mine, what's mine is my own;" and sailors say, "Everyone for himself and the devil for us all." This boys' saying was verified by Shelley's friends.

I one day pointed out to Shelley a picture which had great natural beauty, a sylvan scene; there was a clear pool of water, with wild fowl, a doe and two fawns in the foreground, a timid hare with two leverets, and an impudent magpie, a ledge of rocks and a dense wood in the background; it was richly coloured, the sun just disappearing. I said, "That's a picture that would be a pleasure for ever —all solemnity and solidity; it's a bit of heaven; any carnivorous animal, a fox, or a dog, or a man

with a gun, would transform it into a semblance of hell. Why I like your poetry is, that you have none of these vermin. If you must have men or women, you create them to suit your ideal subjects. The poem you plume yourself on most is the 'Prometheus Unbound.'" Shelley said: "If that is not durable poetry, tried by the severest test, I do not know what is. It is a lofty subject, not inadequately treated, and should not perish with me." I answered: "A man's mind must be richly stored before he can appreciate that poem. Williams and I talking of your poetry, he said he preferred the 'Cenci;' I prefer the 'Epipsychidion.'" He opened his eyes wider. I observed: "Our opinions are worth nothing. We both went to sea when we were eleven, and could have had no education; until near thirty we were wandering about the world, and had no leisure." Shelley replied: "You have the advantage; you saw the things that we read about; you gained knowledge from the living, and we from the dead." This conversation took place in a room while we were waiting for a friend at Leghorn.

Shelley rarely read any book through; he was

eager to get at the matter stripped of the verbiage. Novels were totally uninteresting to him, there was no reality or imagination in them; but he retained some of his early fondness for romances. After glancing at an old Italian romance, in which a Knight of Malta throws down the gauntlet defying all infidels, he remarked: "I should have picked it up. All our knowledge is derived from infidels."

There was a marked individuality in Shelley. In habits, manners, and all the ordinary occurrences of life, he never changed. He took no notice of what other people did; brave, frank, and outspoken, like a well-conditioned boy, well-bred and considerate for others, because he was totally devoid of selfishness and vanity. He did not laugh or even smile, he was always earnest. He had observed that people laughed at the misadventures of others, and therefore thought it cruel; but his eyes and face were so expressive that you could see all the workings within his mind in joy or sorrow. Beauty is said to be a fatal gift to women, and it may be added that genius is a fatal gift to men; they are born before their time and out of harmony with the things about them.

Byron, for eleven or twelve years, was the choice spirit of his age, and cheered on his way by the applause of multitudes; Shelley, on the contrary, for about the same space of time, as he himself said, was denounced as a Pariah; wherever recognized he was shunned. No two men could be more dissimilar in all ways, yet I have seldom known two men more unhappy.

I have been thus particular in describing the younger poet, as he was of a rare variety of the human species. I have met men similar to Byron, but never to Shelley; he was the ideal of what a poet should be.

E. J. T.

March 1878.

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RECORDS

OF

SHELLEY, BYRON, AND THE AUTHOR.

CHAPTER I.

Thou hast like to a rock-built refuge stood
Above the blind and battling multitude:
In honoured poverty thy voice did weave
Songs consecrate to truth and liberty.

Sonnet to Wordsworth.—SHELLEY.

IN the summer of 1820 I was at Ouchy, a village on the margin of the lake of Geneva, in the Canton de Vaud. The most intelligent person I could find in the neighbourhood to talk to was a young bookseller at Lausanne, educated at a German University; he was familiar with the works of many most distinguished writers; his reading was not confined, as it generally is with men of his craft, to catalogues and indexes, for he was an earnest student, and loved literature more than lucre.

As Lausanne is one of the inland harbours of refuge in which wanderers from all countries seek shelter, his shelves contained works in all languages; he was a good linguist, and read the most attractive of them. "The elevation of minds," he said, "was more important than the height of mountains (I was looking at a scale of the latter), and books are the standards to measure them by." He used to translate for me passages from the works of Schiller, Kant, Göthe, and others, and write comments on their paradoxical, mystical, and metaphysical theories. One morning I saw my friend sitting under the acacias on the terrace in front of the house in which Gibbon had lived, and where he wrote the "Decline and Fall." He said, "I am trying to sharpen my wits in this pungent air which gave such a keen edge to the great historian, so that I may fathom this book. Your modern poets, Byron, Scott, and Moore, I can read and understand as I walk along, but I have got hold of a book by one now that makes me stop to take breath and think." It was Shelley's "Queen Mab." As I had never heard that name or title, I asked how he got the volume. "With a lot of new books in English, which I took in exchange

for old French ones. Not knowing the names of the authors, I might not have looked into them, had not a pampered, prying priest smelt this one in my lumber-room, and, after a brief glance at the notes, exploded in wrath, shouting out, 'Infidel, jacobin, leveller: nothing can stop this spread of blasphemy but the stake and the faggot; the world is retrograding into accursed heathenism and universal anarchy!' When the priest had departed, I took up the small book he had thrown down, saying, 'Surely there must be something here worth tasting.' You know the proverb, 'No person throws a stone at a tree that does not bear fruit.'"

"Priests do not," I answered; "so I, too, must have a bite of the forbidden fruit. What do you think of it?"

"To my taste," said the bookseller, "the fruit is crude, but well-flavoured; it requires a strong stomach to digest it; the writer is an enthusiast, and has the true spirit of a poet; he aims at elevating, not, like Byron and Moore, levelling mankind. They say he is but a boy, and this his first offering: if that be true, we shall hear of him again and again."

Some days after this conversation I walked to Lausanne, to breakfast at the hotel with an old friend, Captain Daniel Roberts, of the Navy. He was out sketching, but presently came in accompanied by two English ladies, with whom he had made acquaintance whilst drawing, and whom he brought to our hotel. The husband of one of them soon followed. I saw by their utilitarian garb, as well as by the blisters and blotches on their cheeks, lips, and noses, that they were pedestrian tourists, fresh from the snow-covered mountains, the blazing sun and frosty air having acted on their unseasoned skins as boiling water does on the lobster, by dyeing his dark coat scarlet. The man was evidently a denizen of the north, his accent harsh, skin white, of an angular and bony build, and self-confident and dogmatic in his opinions. The precision and quaintness of his language, as well as his eccentric remarks on common things, stimulated my mind. Our icy islanders thaw rapidly when they have drifted into warmer latitudes: broken loose from its anti-social system, mystic castes, coteries, sets and sects, they lay aside their purse-proud, tuft-hunting, and toadying ways, and are very apt to run riot in the enjoy-

ment of all their senses. Besides we are compelled to talk in strange company, if not from good breeding, to prove our breed, as the gift of speech is often our principal if not sole distinction from the rest of the brute animals.

To return to our breakfast. The travellers, flushed with health, delighted with their excursion, and with appetites earned by bodily and mental activity, were in such high spirits that Roberts and I caught the infection of their mirth; we talked as loud and fast as if under the exhilarating influence of champagne, instead of such a sedative compound as *café au lait.* I can rescue nothing out of oblivion but a few last words. The stranger expressed his disgust at the introduction of carriages into the mountain districts of Switzerland, and at the old fogies who used them.

"As to the arbitrary, pitiless, Godless wretches," he exclaimed, "who have removed nature's landmarks by cutting roads through Alps and Apennines, until all things are reduced to the same dead level, they will be arraigned hereafter with the unjust: they have robbed the best specimens of what men should be of their freeholds in the mountains; the eagle, the black cock, and the red deer they have

tamed or exterminated. The lover of nature can nowhere find a solitary nook to contemplate her beauties. Yesterday," he continued, "at the break of day, I scaled the most rugged height within my reach; it looked inaccessible; this pleasant delusion was quickly dispelled; I was rudely startled out of a deep reverie by the accursed jarring, jingling, and rumbling of a calèche, and harsh voices that drowned the torrent's fall."

The stranger, now hearing a commotion in the street, sprang on his feet, looked out of the window, and rang the bell violently.

"Waiter," he said, "is that our carriage? Why did you not tell us? Come, lasses, be stirring, the freshness of the day is gone. You may rejoice in not having to walk; there is a chance of saving the remnants of skin the sun has left on our chins and noses—to-day we shall be stewed instead of barbecued."

On their leaving the room to get ready for their journey, my friend Roberts told me the strangers were the poet Wordsworth, his wife and sister.

Who could have divined this? I could see no trace, in the hard features and weather-stained brow

of the outer man, of the divinity within him. In a few minutes the travellers re-appeared; we cordially shook hands, and agreed to meet again at Geneva. Now that I knew that I was talking to one of the veterans of the gentle craft, as there was no time to waste in idle ceremony, I asked him abruptly what he thought of Shelley as a poet.

"Nothing," he replied, as abruptly.

Seeing my surprise, he added, "A poet who has not produced a good poem before he is twenty-five, we may conclude cannot, and never will do so."

"The Cenci!" I said eagerly.

"Won't do," he replied, shaking his head, as he got into the carriage: a rough-coated Scotch terrier followed him.

"This hairy fellow is our flea-trap," he shouted out as they started off.

When I recovered from the shock of having heard the harsh sentence passed by an elder bard on a younger brother of the Muses, I exclaimed,

"After all, poets are but earth. It is the old story —Envy—Cain and Abel. Professions, sects, and communities in general, right or wrong, hold together, men of the pen excepted; if one of their

guild is worsted in the battle, they do as the rooks do by their inky brothers, fly from him, cawing and screaming; if they don't fire the shot, they sound the bugle to charge."

I did not then know that the full-fledged author never reads the writings of his cotemporaries, except to cut them up in a review—that being a work of love. In after years, Shelley being dead, Wordsworth confessed this fact; he was then induced to read some of Shelley's poems, and admitted that Shelley was the greatest master of harmonious verse in our modern literature.

CHAPTER II.

Clear, placid Leman! thy contrasted lake
With the wild world I dwelt in, is a thing
Which warns me with its stillness to forsake
Earth's troubled waters for a purer spring.
CHILDE HAROLD.

SHORTLY after I went to Geneva. In the largest country-house (Plangeau) near that city lived a friend of mine, a Cornish baronet, a good specimen of the old school; well-read, and polished by long intercourse with intelligent men of many nations. He retained a custom of the old barons, now obsolete—his dining-hall was open to all his friends; you were welcomed at his table as often as it suited you to go there, without the ceremony of inconvenient invitations.

At this truly hospitable house, I first saw three young men, recently returned from India. They lived together at a pretty villa (*Maison aux Grenades*,

signifying the House of Pomegranates), situated on the shores of the lake, and at an easy walk from the city of Geneva and the baronet's. Their names were George Jervoice, of the Madras Artillery; E. E. Williams, and Thomas Medwin, the two last, lieutenants on half-pay, late of the 8th Dragoons. Medwin was the chief medium that impressed us with a desire to know Shelley; he had known him from childhood; he talked of nothing but the inspired boy, his virtues and his sufferings, so that, irrespective of his genius, we all longed to know him. From all I could gather from him, Shelley lived as he wrote, the life of a true poet, loving solitude, but by no means a cynic. In the two or three months I was at Geneva, I passed many agreeable days at the two villas I have mentioned. Late in the autumn I was unexpectedly called to England; Jervoice and Medwin went to Italy; the Williamses determined on passing the winter at Châlons sur Saône. I offered to drive them there, in a light Swiss carriage of my own; and in the spring to rejoin them, and to go on to Italy together in pursuit of Shelley.

Human animals can only endure a limited amount

of pain or pleasure, excess of either is followed by insensibility. The Williamses, satiated with felicity at their charming villa on the cheerful lake of Geneva, resolved to leave it, and see how long they could exist deprived of everything they had been accustomed to. With such an object, a French provincial town was just the place to try the experiment. Châlons sur Saône was decided on. We commenced our journey in November, in an open carriage. After four days' drive through wind, rain, and mud, we arrived at Châlons in a sorry plight. The immense plain which surrounded the town was flooded; we took up our quarters at an hotel on the slimy banks of the Saône. What a contrast to the villa of pomegranates we had left, we all thought—but said nothing.

When I left them by the *malle-poste*, on my way to Paris, I felt as a man should feel when, stranded on a barren rock, he seizes the only boat and pushes off to the nearest land, leaving his forlorn comrades to perish miserably. After a course of spare diet of soupe maigre, bouilli, sour wine, and solitary confinement had restored their senses, they departed in the spring for the south, and never looked behind

them until they had crossed the Alps. They went direct to the Shelleys; and amongst Williams's letters I find his first impressions of the poet, which I here transcribe:

Pisa, April, 1821.

My dear Trelawny,

We purpose wintering in Florence, and sheltering ourselves from the summer heat at a castle of a place, called Villa Poschi, at Pugnano, two leagues from hence, where, with Shelley for a companion, I promise myself a great deal of pleasure, sauntering in the shady retreats of the olive and chesnut woods that grow above our heads up the hill sides. He has a small boat building, only ten or twelve feet long, to go adventuring, as he calls it, up the many little rivers and canals that intersect this part of Italy; some of which pass through the most beautiful scenery imaginable, winding among the terraced gardens at the base of the neighbouring mountains, and opening into such lakes as Bientina, &c.

Shelley is certainly a man of most astonishing genius in appearance, extraordinarily young, of manners mild and amiable, but withal full of life and

fun. His wonderful command of language, and the ease with which he speaks on what are generally considered abstruse subjects, are striking; in short, his ordinary conversation is akin to poetry, for he sees things in the most singular and pleasing lights; if he wrote as he talked, he would be popular enough. Lord Byron and others think him by far the most imaginative poet of the day. The style of his lordship's letters to him is quite that of a pupil, such as asking his opinion, and demanding his advice on certain points, &c. I must tell you, that the idea of the tragedy of "Manfred," and many of the philosophical, or rather metaphysical, notions interwoven in the composition of the fourth Canto of "Childe Harold," are of his suggestion; but this, of course, is between ourselves. A few nights ago I nearly put an end to the Poet and myself. We went to Leghorn, to see after the little boat, and, as the wind blew excessively hard, and fair, we resolved upon returning to Pisa in her, and accordingly started with a huge sail, and at 10 o'clock P.M. capsized her.

I commenced this letter yesterday morning, but was prevented from continuing it by the very per-

son of whom I am speaking, who, having heard me complain of a pain in my chest since the time of our ducking, brought with him a doctor, and I am now writing to you in bed, with a blister on the part supposed to be affected. I am ordered to lie still and try to sleep, but I prefer sitting up and bringing this sheet to a conclusion. A General R., an Englishman, has been poisoned by his daughter and her paramour, a Venetian servant, by small doses of arsenic, so that the days of the "Cenci" are revived, with this difference, that crimes seem to strengthen with keeping. Poor Beatrice was driven to parricide by long and unendurable outrages: in this last case, the parent was sacrificed by the lowest of human passions, the basis of many crimes. By the by, talking of Beatrice and the "Cenci," I have a horrid history to tell you of that unhappy girl, that it is impossible to put on paper: you will not wonder at the act, but admire the virtue (an odd expression, you will perhaps think) that inspired the blow. Adieu. Jane desires to be very kindly remembered, and believe me

Very sincerely yours,

E. E. WILLIAMS.

In a subsequent letter he gave me a foretaste of what I might expect to find in Lord Byron.

Pisa, December, 1821.

MY DEAR TRELAWNY,

Why, how is this? I will swear that yesterday was Christmas Day, for I celebrated it at a splendid feast given by Lord Byron to what I call his Pistol Club—*i.e.* to Shelley, Medwin, a Mr. Taaffe, and myself, and was scarcely awake from the vision of it when your letter was put into my hands, dated 1st of *January*, 1822. Time flies fast enough, but you, in the rapidity of your motions, contrive to outwing the old fellow; rather take a plume or two from your mental pinions, and add them, like Mercury, to your heels, and let us see you before another year draws upon us. Forty years hence, my lad, you will treat the present with more respect than to *ante*-date the coming one. But I hope that time with you will always fly as unheeded as it now appears to do. Lord Byron is the very spirit of this place—that is, to those few to whom, like Mokannah, he has lifted his veil. When you asked me in your last letter if it was probable to become at all inti-

mate with him, I replied in a manner which I considered it most prudent to do, from motives which are best explained when I see you. Now, however, I know him a great deal better, and think I may safely say that that point will rest entirely with yourself. The eccentricities of an assumed character, which a total retirement from the world almost rendered a natural one, are daily wearing off. He sees none of the numerous English who are here, excepting those I have named. And of this I am selfishly glad, for one sees nothing of a man in mixed societies. It is difficult to move him, he says, when he is once fixed, but he seems bent upon joining our party at Spezzia next summer.

I shall reserve all that I have to say about the boat until we meet at the select committee, which is intended to be held on that subject when you arrive here. Have a boat we must, and if we can get Roberts to build her, so much the better. We are settled here for the winter, perhaps many winters, for we have taken apartments and furnished them. This is a step that anchors a man at once, nay, moors him head and stern: you will find us at the Tre Palazzi, 349, Lung'Arno. Pray,

remember me to Roberts; tell him he must be content to take me by the hand, though he should not discover a pipe *in* my mouth, or mustachios on it—the first makes me sick, and the last makes Jane so.

Bring with you any new books you may have. There is a Mrs. B. here, with a litter of seven daughters: she is the gayest lady, and the only one who gives dances, for the young squaws are arriving at that age when, as Lord Byron says, they must waltz for their livelihood. When a man gets on this strain, the sooner he concludes his letter the better. Addio. Believe me

Very truly yours,

E. E. Williams.

CHAPTER III.

For nobody can write the life of a man but those who have ate and drank, and lived in social intercourse with him.—Dr. Johnson.

Men can be estimated by those who knew them not, only as they are represented by those who knew them.—Ibid.

I was not accustomed to the town life I was then leading, and became as tired of society as town-folks are of solitude. The great evil in solitude is, that your brain lies idle; your muscles expand by exercise, and your wits contract from the want of it.

To obviate this evil and maintain the just equilibrium between the body and the brain, I determined to pass the coming winter in the wildest part of Italy, the Maremma, in the midst of the marshes and malaria, with my friends Roberts and Williams; keen sportsmen both—that part of the country being well stocked with woodcocks and wild fowl.

For this purpose, I shipped an ample supply of dogs, guns, and other implements of the chase to Leghorn. For the exercise of my brain, I proposed passing my summer with Shelley and Byron, boating in the Mediterranean. After completing my arrangements, I started in the autumn by the French *malle-poste,* from Paris to Châlons, regained possession of the horse and cabriolet I had left with Williams, and drove myself to Geneva, where Roberts was waiting for me. After a short delay, I continued my journey south with Roberts in my Swiss carriage, so that we could go on or stop, where and when we pleased. By our method of travelling, we could sketch, shoot, fish, and observe everything at our leisure. If our progress was slow, it was most pleasant. We crossed Mount Cenis, and in due course arrived at Genoa. After a long stop at that city of painted palaces, anxious to see the Poet, I drove to Pisa alone. I arrived late, and after putting up my horse at the inn and dining, hastened to the Tre Palazzi, on the Lung' Arno, where the Shelleys and Williamses lived on different flats under the same roof, as is the custom on the Continent. The Williamses received me in their earnest cordial manner; we had a great

deal to communicate to each other, and were in loud and animated conversation, when I was rather put out by observing in the passage near the open door, opposite to where I sat, a pair of glittering eyes steadily fixed on mine; it was too dark to make out whom they belonged to. With the acuteness of a woman, Mrs. Williams's eyes followed the direction of mine, and going to the doorway, she laughingly said,

"Come in, Shelley, it's only our friend Tre just arrived."

Swiftly gliding in, blushing like a girl, a tall thin stripling held out both his hands; and although I could hardly believe as I looked at his flushed, feminine, and artless face that it could be the Poet, I returned his warm pressure. After the ordinary greetings and courtesies he sat down and listened. I was silent from astonishment: was it possible this mild-looking beardless boy could be the veritable monster at war with all the world?—excommunicated by the Fathers of the Church, deprived of his civil rights by the fiat of a grim Lord Chancellor, discarded by every member of his family, and denounced by the rival sages of our literature as the

founder of a Satanic school? I could not believe it; it must be a hoax.

It is difficult for the present generation to conceive the rancorous bigotry that existed fifty years ago.

Those who questioned the Divinity of Christ, or avowed their disbelief, were branded as felons, and every man's hand was against them.

Shelley, one of the most benevolent and humane men of his time, was shunned (as if he had a pestilential disease) from his anti-Christian writings before he was twenty-one years of age.

He was habited like a boy, in a black jacket and trowsers, which he seemed to have outgrown, or his tailor, as is the custom, had most shamefully stinted him in his "sizings." Mrs. Williams saw my embarrassment, and to relieve me asked Shelley what book he had in his hand. His face brightened, and he answered briskly,

"Calderon's 'Magico Prodigioso;' I am translating some passages in it."

"Oh, read it to us!"

Shoved off from the shore of common-place incidents that could not interest him, and fairly launched

on a theme that did, he instantly became oblivious of everything but the book in his hand. The masterly manner in which he analysed the genius of the author, his lucid interpretation of the story, and the ease with which he translated into our language the most subtle and imaginative passages of the Spanish poet, were marvellous, as was his command of the two languages. After this touch of his quality I no longer doubted his identity; a dead silence ensued; looking up, I asked,

"Where is he?"

Mrs. Williams said, "Who? Shelley! Oh, he comes and goes like a spirit, no one knows when or where."

Presently he reappeared with Mrs. Shelley. She brought us back from the ideal world Shelley had left us in, to the real one, welcomed me to Italy, and asked me the news of London and Paris, the new books, operas, and bonnets, marriages, murders, and other marvels. The Poet vanished, and tea appeared. Mary Woolstonecraft (the authoress), the wife of William Godwin, died in 1797, in giving birth to their only child, Mary, married to the poet Shelley; so that at the time I am speaking of Mrs. Shelley

was twenty-four. Such a rare pedigree of genius was enough to interest me in her, irrespective of her own merits as an authoress. The most striking feature in her face was her calm, grey eyes; she was rather under the English standard of woman's height, very fair and light-haired, witty, social, and animated in the society of friends, though mournful in solitude; like Shelley, though in a minor degree, she had the power of expressing her thoughts in varied and appropriate words, derived from familiarity with the works of our vigorous old writers. Neither of them used obsolete or foreign words. This command of our language struck me the more as contrasted with the scanty vocabulary used by ladies in society, in which a score of poor hackneyed phrases suffice to express all that is felt or considered proper to reveal.

CHAPTER IV.

This should have been a noble creature—he
Hath all the energy which would have made
A goodly frame of glorious elements
Had they been wisely mingled.

MANFRED.

AT two o'clock on the following day, in company with Shelley, I crossed the Ponte Vecchio, and went on the Lung' Arno to the Palazzo Lanfranchi, the residence of Lord Byron. We entered a large marble hall, ascended a giant staircase, passed through an equally large room over the hall, and were shown into a smaller apartment which had books and a billiard-table in it. A surly-looking bull-dog (Moretto) announced us, by growling, and the Pilgrim instantly advanced from an inner chamber, and stood before us. His halting gait was apparent, but he moved with quickness; and although pale, he looked as fresh, vigorous, and animated, as any man I ever

saw. His pride, added to his having lived for many years alone, was the cause, I suppose, that he was embarrassed at first meeting with strangers; this he tried to conceal by an affectation of ease. After the interchange of common-place question and answer, he regained his self-possession, and turning to Shelley, said,

"As you are addicted to poesy, go and read the versicles I was delivered of last night, or rather this morning—that is, if you can. I am posed. I am getting scurrilous. There is a letter from Tom Moore; read, you are blarneyed in it ironically."

He then took a cue, and asked me to play billiards; he struck the balls and moved about the table briskly, but neither played the game nor cared a rush about it, and chatted after this idle fashion:

"The purser of the frigate I went to Constantinople in called an officer *scurrilous* for alluding to his wig. Now, the day before I mount a wig—and I shall soon want one—I'll ride about with it on the pummel of my saddle, or stick it on my cane.

"In that same frigate, near the Dardanelles, we nearly ran down an American trader with his cargo

of notions. Our captain, old Bathurst, hailed, and with the dignity of a Lord, asked him where he came from, and the name of his ship. The Yankee captain bellowed,

"'You copper-bottomed sarpent, I guess you'll know when I've reported you to Congress.'"

The surprise I expressed by my looks was not at what he said, but that he could register such trifles in his memory. Of course with other such small anecdotes, his great triumph at having swum from Sestos to Abydos was not forgotten. I had come prepared to see a solemn mystery, and so far as I could judge from the first act it seemed to me very like a solemn farce. I forgot that great actors when off the stage are dull dogs; and that even the mighty Prospero, without his book and magic mantle, was but an ordinary mortal. At this juncture Shelley joined us; he never laid aside his book and magic mantle; he waved his wand, and Byron, after a faint show of defiance, stood mute; his quick perception of the truth of Shelley's comments on his poem transfixed him, and Shelley's earnestness and just criticism held him captive.

I was however struck with Byron's mental vivacity

and wonderful memory; he defended himself with a variety of illustrations, precedents, and apt quotations from modern authorities, disputing Shelley's propositions, not by denying their truth as a whole, but in parts, and the subtle questions he put would have puzzled a less acute reasoner than the one he had to contend with. During this discussion I scanned the Pilgrim closely.

In external appearance Byron realized that ideal standard with which imagination adorns genius. He was in the prime of life, thirty-four; of middle height, five feet eight and a half inches; regular features, without a stain or furrow on his pallid skin, his shoulders broad, chest open, body and limbs finely proportioned. His small highly-finished head and curly hair had an airy and graceful appearance from the massiveness and length of his throat: you saw his genius in his eyes and lips. In short, Nature could do little more than she had done for him, both in outward form and in the inward spirit she had given to animate it. But all these rare gifts to his jaundiced imagination only served to make his one personal defect (lameness) the more apparent, as a flaw is magnified in a diamond when polished; and he

brooded over that blemish as sensitive minds will brood until they magnify a wart into a wen.

His lameness certainly helped to make him sceptical, cynical, and savage. There was no peculiarity in his dress, it was adapted to the climate: a tartan jacket braided—he said it was the Gordon pattern, and that his mother was of that race. A blue velvet cap with a gold band, and very loose nankeen trowsers, strapped down so as to cover his feet: his throat was not bare, as represented in drawings. At three o'clock, one of his servants announced that his horses were at the door, which broke off his discussion with Shelley, and we all followed him to the hall. At the outer door we found three or four very ordinary-looking horses; they had holsters on the saddles, and many other superfluous trappings, such as the Italians delight in, and Englishmen eschew. Shelley, and an Irish visitor just announced, mounted two of these sorry jades. I luckily had my own cattle. Byron got into a calèche, and did not mount his horse until we had cleared the gates of the town, to avoid, as he said, being stared at by the "damned Englishers," who generally congregated before his house on the Arno. After an hour or two of slow riding and lively talk—for he was generally in good

spirits when on horseback—we stopped at a small *podére* on the roadside, and dismounting went into the house, in which we found a table with wine and cakes. From thence we proceeded into the vineyard at the back; the servant brought two brace of pistols, a cane was stuck in the ground, and a five-paul piece, the size of half-a-crown, placed in a slit at the top of the cane. Byron, Shelley, and I fired at fifteen paces, and one of us generally hit the cane or the coin; our firing was pretty equal; after five or six shots each, Byron pocketed the battered money and sauntered about the grounds. We then remounted. On our return homewards, Shelley urged Byron to complete something he had begun. Byron smiled and replied,

"John Murray, my patron and paymaster, says my plays won't act. I don't mind that, for I told him they were not written for the stage—but he adds, my poesy won't sell: that I do mind, for I have an 'itching palm.' He urges me to resume my old 'Corsair style, to please the ladies.'"

Shelley indignantly answered,

"That is very good logic for a bookseller, but not for an author: the shop interest is to supply the ephemeral demand of the day. It is not for

him but you 'to put a ring in the monster's nose' to keep him from mischief."

Byron smiling at Shelley's warmth, said,

"John Murray is right, if not righteous: all I have yet written has been for women-kind; you must wait until I am forty, their influence will then die a natural death, and I will show the men what I can do."

Shelley replied,

"Do it now—write nothing but what your conviction of its truth inspires you to write; you should give counsel to the wise, and not take it from the foolish. Time will reverse the judgment of the vulgar. Contemporary criticism only represents the amount of ignorance genius has to contend with."

I was then and afterwards pleased and surprised at Byron's passiveness and docility in listening to Shelley—but all who heard him felt the charm of his simple, earnest manner; while Byron knew him to be exempt from the egotism, pedantry, coxcombry, and, more than all, the rivalry of authorship, and that he was the truest and most discriminating of his admirers.

Byron looking at the western sky, exclaimed,

"Where is the green your friend the Laker talks such fustian about," meaning Coleridge—

> "'Gazing on the western sky,
> And its peculiar tint of yellow green.'
> *Dejection: an Ode.*

"Who ever," asked Byron, "saw a green sky?"

Shelley was silent, knowing that if he replied, Byron would give vent to his spleen. So I said, "The sky in England is oftener green than blue."

"Black, you mean," rejoined Byron; and this discussion brought us to his door.

As he was dismounting he mentioned two odd words that would rhyme. I observed on the felicity he had shown in this art, repeating a couplet out of "Don Juan;" he was both pacified and pleased at this, and putting his hand on my horse's crest, observed,

"If you are curious in these matters, look in Swift. I will send you a volume; he beats us all hollow; his rhymes are wonderful."

And then we parted for that day, which I have been thus particular in recording, not only as it was the first of our acquaintance, but as containing as fair a sample as I can give of his appearance, ordinary habits, and conversation.

A short time after I knew Byron I said to Shelley,

"How very unlike Byron is to what people say of him. I see no mystery about him—he is too free; he says things better not said. I shall take care what I say to him. He reads parts of letters from his London correspondents." (Mrs. Shelley smiled; she knew they cautioned Byron not to risk his popularity by coupling his name with Shelley's.) "He is as impulsive and jealous as a woman, and may be as changeable."

At a subsequent conversation Shelley called Mrs. Shelley and said,

"Mary, Trelawny has found out Byron already. How stupid we were—how long it took us."

"That," she observed, "is because he lives with the living, and we with the dead."

I observed,

"Byron asked me if he were like the person I expected. I said, No. He went on: 'They know nothing about me. How should they? My poesy is one thing, I am another. I am not such an anthropophagist as they make me. My poetry is a separate faculty. The ideal has no

effect on the real character. I can only write when the *estro* is upon me; at all other times I am myself.'"

Mrs. Shelley was transcribing a drama of Byron's, and she repeated some lines out of it,

"'One, two, strikes the never merry clock.'"

Shelley said,

"They are excellent, but he fails in the drama. He is too abstract and diffuse. We all must fail. Shakespeare is the lion in the path; he has done for the drama what the Greeks had done for sculpture—perfected it."

Mrs. SHELLEY, laughing: Byron has the vanity to be jealous of Shakespeare.

SHELLEY: Byron's power is wonderful and not half wrought out. All may envy him; his wings will bear him higher; he grows stronger by every new effort.

On my mentioning a popular poem, Shelley said,

"Versifying and rhyming are very well, but they don't constitute a poem. Any subject that can be as well expressed in prose as verse is not poetry of a high class. A great portion of Pope's and Dryden's, and numerous other poets' works,

would be as well in prose. Walter Scott's prose stories are excellent."

Stopping at the entrance of his own abode on the Lung' Arno, at Pisa, Byron said,

"Can't ask you to dine, for my dinner is soda-water and biscuits; but come about nine, and we will have blue-ruin, or hock if you prefer it. There will be no one else; perhaps Medwin may come."

TRE.: I promised the Shelleys. His banquet is less luxurious than yours—bread and unsophisticated water.

BYRON: The Snake neither eats nor drinks.

TRE.: I am not an air plant, and shall feed at the Locanda.

As the Poet was about to dismount, I said,

"You should know Medwin is taking notes of your talk."

BYRON: He dare not publish them.

TRE.: If he outlives you he will.

BYRON: So many lies are told about me that Medwin won't be believed.

TRE.: As an Indian said to me, "May be yes, may be no." Medwin has no design to lie about you; he is credulous and will note your idle words.

BYRON: When I am dead I am nothing; whilst I'm alive I can keep them all in order with my pen or my pistol. If he publishes lies about me, you can say they are lies.

And so we parted.

When I mentioned this talk to the Shelleys, Mrs. Shelley, smiling, said,

"That won't restrain, it will stimulate Byron; he will blab the more."

CHAPTER V.

Strangers yet!
After years of life together,
After fair and stormy weather,
After travels in far lands,
After touch of wedded hands—
Why then joined—why ever met,
If they must be strangers yet?

LORD HOUGHTON.

Minds are so hardly matched, that even the first,
Though paired by God in paradise, were curst.

MEN of books, particularly Poets, are rarely men of action, their mental energy exhausts their bodily powers. Byron has been generally considered an exception to this rule, he certainly so considered himself: and so he was. The idle English had become home-keeping youths; from the long wars all over the world, travelling had been impeded everywhere. Now that we have peace, with the aid of steam and railroads the difficulties have vanished.

In 1809 Byron first left England, rode on horseback through Spain and Portugal, crossed the Mediterranean on board a frigate, and landed in Greece; where he passed two years in wandering through that country: this, with a trip to Smyrna, Constantinople, Malta, and Gibraltar, generally on board our men-of-war, where you have all the ease, comfort, and most of the luxuries of your own homes, was at that time an adventurous career for a Lord. Anything more luxurious than sailing on those seas, and riding through those lands, and in such a blessed climate, I know from experience, is not to be found in this world. Taking into account the result of these travels as shown in his works, he might well boast; he often said, if he had ever written a line worth preserving, it was Greece that inspired it. After this trip he returned to England, and remained there some years, four or five; then abandoned it for ever, passed through the Netherlands, went up the Rhine, paused for some months in Switzerland, crossed the Alps into Italy, and never left that peninsula until the last year of his life.

The Pilgrim moved about like a Pasha, with a

host of attendants, and all that he and they required on the journey. So far as I could learn from Fletcher, his yeoman bold—and he had been with him from the time of his first leaving England—Byron, wherever he was, so far as it was practicable, pursued the same lazy, dawdling habits he continued during the time I knew him. He was seldom out of his bed before noon, when he drank a cup of very strong green tea, without sugar or milk. At two he ate a biscuit and drank soda-water. At three he mounted his horse and sauntered along the road—and generally the same road, —if alone, racking his brains for fitting matter and rhymes for the coming poem; he dined at seven, as frugally as anchorites are said in story-books to have done; at nine he visited the family of Count Gamba; on his return home he sat reading or composing until two or three o'clock in the morning, and then to bed, often feverish, restless, and exhausted—to dream, as he said, more than to sleep.

Something very urgent, backed by the importunity of those who had influence over him, could alone induce him to break through the routine I have described, for a day, and it was certain to be

resumed on the next—he was constant in this alone.

His conversation was anything but literary except when Shelley was near him. The character he most commonly appeared in was of the free and easy sort, such as had been in vogue when he was in London, and George IV. was Regent; and his talk was seasoned with anecdotes of the great actors on and off the stage, boxers, gamblers, duellists, drunkards, &c., &c., appropriately garnished with the slang and scandal of that day. Such things had all been in fashion, and were at that time considered accomplishments by gentlemen; and of this tribe of Mohawks the Prince Regent was the chief, and allowed to be the most perfect specimen. Byron, not knowing the tribe was extinct, still prided himself on having belonged to it; at nothing was he more indignant than at being treated as a man of letters, instead of as a Lord and a man of fashion: this prevented foreigners and literary people from getting on with him, for they invariably so offended. His long absence had not effaced the mark John Bull brands his children with; the instant he loomed above the horizon, on

foot or horseback, you saw at a glance he was a Britisher. He did not understand foreigners, nor they him; and, during the time I knew him, he associated with no Italians except the family of Count Gamba. He seemed to take an especial pleasure in making a clean breast to all new-comers, as if to mock their previous conceptions of him, and to give the lie to the portraits published of him.

> "The lunatic, the lover, and the poet
> Are of imagination all compact,"

says our greatest Poet; and the Stoic philosophers denounced all poetry as lies. Men of genius are not to be measured by the ordinary standard of men; their organization is different; they stand higher and see farther; we hope to see the diviner part of human nature exemplified in the life of a pre-eminent poet. Byron disenchanted me. He saw it, and said, as we were riding together alone, shortly after I knew him,

"Now, confess, you expected to find me a 'Timon of Athens,' or a 'Timur the Tartar:' or did you think I was a mere sing-song driveller of poesy, full of what I heard Braham at a rehearsal call '*Entusamusy;*' and are you not mystified at

finding me what I am—a man of the world—never in earnest—laughing at all things mundane?"

Then he muttered, as to himself,

"The world is a bundle of hay,
Mankind are the asses who pull."

Any man who cultivates his intellectual faculty so highly as to seem at times inspired, would be too much above us, if, on closer inspection, we should not find it alloyed with weaknesses akin to our own. Byron soon put you at your ease on this point. Godwin, in his "Thoughts on Man," says, "Shakespeare, amongst all his varied characters, has not attempted to draw a perfect man;" and Pope says,

"A perfect man's a monster the world ne'er saw."

At any rate I should not seek for a model amongst men of the pen; they are too thin-skinned and egotistical. The humour of the irascible poet depended on circumstances; when irritated by a recent letter from England, or memory of an old difference or by indigestion, he spared no one. Like a Malay under the influence of an overdose of his favourite drug, haschish, he ran a-muck, regardless of all consequences. In his perverse and

moody humours, he would give vent to his Satanic vein. After a long silence, one day on horseback, he began,

"I have a conscience, although the world gives me no credit for it; I am now repenting, not of the few sins I have committed, but of the many I have not committed. There are things, too, we should not do, if they were not forbidden. My 'Don Juan' was cast aside and almost forgotten, until I heard that the pharisaic synod in John Murray's back parlour had pronounced it as highly immoral, and unfit for publication. 'Dost thou think, because thou art virtuous, there shall be no more cakes and ale?' Now my brain is throbbing, and must have vent. I opined gin was inspiration, but cant is stronger. To-day I had another letter warning me against the Snake (Shelley). He, alone, in this age of humbug, dares stem the current, as he did to-day the flooded Arno in his skiff, although I could not observe he made any progress. The attempt is better than being swept along as all the rest are, with the filthy garbage scoured from its banks."

Taking advantage of this panegyric on Shelley,

I observed, he might do him a great service at little cost, by a friendly word or two in his next work, such as he had bestowed on authors of less merit.

Assuming a knowing look, he continued,

"All trades have their mysteries; if we crack up a popular author, he repays us in the same coin, principal and interest. A friend may have repaid money lent—can't say any of mine have; but who ever heard of the interest being added thereto?"

I rejoined,

"By your own showing you are indebted to Shelley; some of his best verses are to express his admiration of your genius."

"Ay," he said, with a significant look, "who reads them? If we puffed the Snake, it might not turn out a profitable investment. If he cast off the slough of his mystifying metaphysics, he would want no puffing."

Seeing I was not satisfied, he added,

"If we introduced Shelley to our readers, they might draw comparisons, and they are '*odorous*.'"

After Shelley's death, Byron, in a letter to Moore, of the 2nd of August, 1822, says,

"There is another man gone, about whom the world was ill-naturedly, and ignorantly, and brutally mistaken. It will, perhaps, do him justice *now*, when he can be no better for it."

In a letter to Murray, of an earlier date, he says,

"You were all mistaken about Shelley, who was without exception, the best and least selfish man I ever knew."

And, again, he says, "You are all mistaken about Shelley; you do not know how mild, how tolerant, how good he was."

What Byron says of the world, that it will, perhaps, do Shelley justice when he can be no better for it, is far more applicable to himself. If the world erred, they did so in ignorance; Shelley was a myth to them. Byron had no such plea to offer.

Talking of the distinguishing quality of the humans,

TRE.: Shelley says it is superstition—Landor, that we have the worst of all the animals and the best of none.

BYRON: Man is a two-legged reptile, crafty and

venomous.—After a pause, coming close to me, and smiling cynically, Everybody hates everybody.

TRE.: That's in his way.

He took no notice of this; he urged his horse, and we trotted a mile or two, then resumed our talk.

BYRON: I wrote thirty-five lines of "Don Juan" last night, or rather this morning; was stopped for a rhyme. It was in my head, there it stuck; strong waters could not loosen it, trotting has. I read it in a magazine, an old one, years ago, in a couplet quoted from Swift. He beat all the craft; he could find a rhyme for any word. To-night I shall write thirty more lines, and that will finish a canto—a thousand guineas. Murray now says pounds: I won't be stinted of my sizings. Murray told Tom Moore he was no judge of the morality; but sermons did not sell, and the "Don" had a "devil of a sale." I must make him a sinner, but he shall reform and end as a saint. Who are your friends that passed us?

TRE.: A captain of the navy and his wife. He paid his ship off, and having nothing to do, spliced himself to a widow.

BYRON: Money?

TRE.: No, worse—two children.

BYRON: What marry a widow for? Could he not catch a mermaid? "Well, God is a good man"; he supplies the widows and orphans with fools.

Another brisk trot, then a walk.

BYRON: Mrs. Shelley demurs at my grammar and spelling. I am in good company—Cromwell and Napoleon, they were careless of grammar, but careful of the matter; so am I.

After ruminating, he came close, and said,

"What would you do when dared to do a thing?"

TRE.: Do it.

BYRON: Shelley was so trapped by a canting parson at the Mer de Glace; I am not to be caught by chaff. People talk of their hosts of friends: can any one name twelve intimate acquaintances? I don't feel friendship for any one, not even for Shelley. My London acquaintance I have no sympathy with.

TRE.: Tom Moore and Hobhouse?

BYRON: We have been comrades; we must have

allies. Moore is the best convivial companion, Hobhouse is a good man of business, and I am the worst. If we have a good balance at our banker's, we shan't want friends. They make free with our scudi; gold is a jealous god.

TRE.: The Tuscans have a humane law; they imprison all beggars except the blind.

BYRON: They should imprison borrowers; they are the worst of beggars. Travelling in Greece, Hobhouse and I wrangled every day. His guide was Mitford's fabulous History. He had a greed for legendary lore, topography, inscriptions; gabbled in *lingua franca* to the Ephori of the villages, goat-herds, and our dragoman. He would potter with map and compass at the foot of Pindus, Parnes, and Parnassus, to ascertain the site of some ancient temple or city. I rode my mule up them. They had haunted my dreams from boyhood; the pines, eagles, vultures, and owls, were descended from those Themistocles and Alexander had seen, and were not degenerated like the humans; the rocks and torrents the same. John Cam's dogged perseverance in pursuit of his hobby is to be envied; I have no hobby and no perseverance. I gazed at the

stars, and ruminated; took no notes, asked no questions.

TRE.: Your memory did more than his notes. You wrote "Childe Harold"; what have his notes produced?

BYRON: He said nature had intended him for a poet, but chance made him take to politics, and that I wrote prose better than poetry.

TRE.: That proves he has no poetry in him.

BYRON: If I am a poet—Gifford says I am; I doubt it—the air of Greece made me one. I climbed to the haunts of Minerva and the Muses.—He leered at me with an ironical smile.—John Cam can plod at books twelve hours a day; one or two hours does for me, excepting Scott's—I read him through. Shelley wants me to read more and write less. My mind is vagrant; I can't do drudgery. Scott and Cobbett are the popular writers now, and their pens are never idle. You must go on; if you lag you are outstripped in the race. When a new book is sent me, I read the last chapter and then the first: if they are good, I may go through it. I like Cobbett's "Register"; if I were Minister I would make him my Attorney-General. When Sam Rogers

has hatched a stanza, he sends it round to his poetical friends for approval. His Italy has cost him thousands in illustrations; his brats are stillborn. Why did you prevent his riding my black horse?

TRE.: He is a stumbler.

Byron glanced cynically.

Yes, he fell with me the second time I rode him; he is now reserved for my particular friends. A fall would do old Rogers some good; his blood is stagnant.

TRE.: He has a parboiled look; it's difficult to believe he is a poet.

BYRON: He is a banker and poetizer. He feeds the needy critics, and they dub him poet. The black horse I bought of a captain of the Pope's guard at Ravenna, warranted. I sent for the captain and demanded my money paid. He refused; I waxed wroth. He blustered, and said he was descended from a noble Roman family, was commander of a troop of his Holiness the Pope's Guard. "Then I'll give you satisfaction." I opened a chest in the hall, and told him to choose his arms. I took a Spanish rapier; he had his sword. I drew my toledo, an heirloom, and went towards him. He

faltered and retreated, and as I neared him, he exclaimed, "I don't fight in the dark, and we are forbidden duelling." As I lifted my arm to strike he decamped in haste.

TRE: Should you not, as a Carbonaro, have (as Iago has it) removed him by yerking him under the ribs? Your groom would have sacked him, dropped him in a hole in the yard or in the pine forest.

BYRON: You are a cool hand.

TRE.: At Ravenna they say manslaughter is not considered a heinous offence.

BYRON: It used not to be so, but it is now. Noblemen hired bravos. I am a respecter of the law. When I want to punish a man, I let an attorney loose at him—he tortures him, and so worries him to death.

Byron's great-uncle fought with swords, in a room in London, in the dusk of the evening, killed his opponent, and was tried for his life, and doubtless this was in Byron's mind when he challenged the captain to fight in the twilight, with swords, and without witnesses.

BYRON: A Frenchman visited me this morning.

He said he was translating a poem of mine, and wished me to revise it. I told him I could not speak French.

TRE.: Can't you?

BYRON: I would not lower myself by speaking it like a German waiter at an hotel. The Frenchman expressed his astonishment, and then jabbered in vile English; said his wife was English, and she corrected him; asked me to refer to my poem. I told him I had no copy, that after they were sent to the publisher I saw no more of them. (If a copy were sent to him, he looked over it and gave it away directly.) I said I had never been in Paris, or any part of France. He was amazed, and asked why? When I left England, Paris was occupied by the allies. Foreigners are told that I write pretty verses, and they think I can do nothing else—that I am a literary grub. I could not endure to witness a country associated in my mind with so many and glorious deeds of art and arms so fallen, bullied by certain rascal officers, slaves in authority, the knaves of justice, her eagle chained, and the allied despots crowing over her. English money has done it!

TRE.: Shelley says he finds it far more irksome to write prose for publication than poetry.

BYRON: So do I. All this morning I was in labour at a letter to John Murray. It will be made public in his back parlour, where the rooks meet and will caw over it. They complain of my showing letters; mine go a regular circuit.

TRE.: Why do your London friends treat Shelley so cavalierly? they rarely notice him. He is as well born and bred as any of them. What are they afraid of?

BYRON, leeringly: He is not a Christian.

TRE.: Are they?

BYRON: Ask them.

TRE.: If I met the Devil at your table, I should treat him as a friend of yours.

Byron, scanning me keenly to see if I was jeering, said, "The Devil is a Royal personage."

Shelley, in his elegy on the death of Keats, gives this picture of himself:—

> "Midst others of less note came one frail form,
> A phantom amongst men, companionless
> As the last cloud of an expiring storm,
> Whose thunder is its knell. He, as I guess,
> Had gazed on nature's naked loveliness

Actæon-like; and now he fled astray
With feeble steps o'er the world's wilderness;
And his own thoughts along that rugged way
Pursued, like raging hounds, their father and their prey.
He came the last, neglected and apart,
A herd-abandoned deer struck by the hunter's dart.
All stood aloof."

The next day, resuming the talk regarding Shelley—

Byron. They don't dislike or fear Shelley; they are afraid of each other, and of poor innocent me. They spy a taint in my late writings, and think that I have fallen into bad hands. They say my orthodoxy is verging on heterodoxy. Their impression is, my popularity is declining. Cain, they opine, is a suggestion of Shelley. (Turning to me) You are the only one of my visitors they approve of. You saved Rogers from a stumbling horse and a savage dog.

The dog story is this. On my nearing the passage leading to Byron's study, where Moretto was as a sentinel to give notice to his master of any stranger's approach, I heard the dog's low growl, and a voice trying to quiet him, and evidently terrified. I hastened up, and found Rogers in a fix. The dog knew me, and so I convoyed the old

poet through the pass. Byron was in the billiard-room, and I saw by his sinister look he had heard the row, knew it was Rogers, and maliciously enjoyed his visitor's terror. He advanced briskly towards him, saying, "My dear Rogers, glad to see you; didn't know it was you," went on bantering him, saying to me, "Excuse us for five minutes," took Rogers by the arm and led him into his *sanctum sanctorum*. He told me after that on hearing Rogers's voice in the passage he was giving the finishing touches to the most savage satire on him that he had ever written, repeating the last lines. "I had only time to put it under the sofa, and he sat on it."

Byron's malice was caused by a London correspondent accusing Rogers as the author of scandalous stories relating to Byron. Rogers was a silent, cautious, and excessively timid man, and had the reputation of saying, in his quiet way, sarcastic things. If a man acquires this reputation, he is debited with all the ill-natured scandal that society gloats on. Byron believing this (I did not; there was no proof), he should have been on his guard in his talk. On the contrary, it excited the poet, like

a perverse child, to what he designated mystifying him. This game of equivocation—*i.e.*, lying—had been in fashion with the young swells in Byron's time; to me it seemed simply perplexing people with exaggerated falsehoods. In this way Byron, to astonish and shock the demure and moral Rogers, and stock his budget, plied him with a highly-coloured catalogue of his delinquencies, glancing at me to mark his mystifications. Rogers was a good listener: his face expressed nothing, and he said nothing. My conviction was he believed nothing he had heard. Byron's intimates smiled at his vaunting of his vices, but comparative strangers stared, and noted his sayings to retail to their friends, and that is the way many scandals got abroad. George IV. had made it the fashion, and the men about town were ashamed of being thought virtuous, and bragged of their profligacy. Byron, in his splenetic moods, if any one uttered moral or sentimental commonplace twaddle, sneered and scoffed, and denounced it as cant. The great poet, in the words of the greatest, "Gave his worst of thoughts the worst of words." Under the same provocation, I and others have done the same.

Byron's words were not lost, but noted and circulated, ours forgotten. The nicknames given us in our youth are generally appropriate. Byron was designated "Baby Byron;" it fitted him to a T—wayward, capricious, lured by glitter and false lights and his vivid imagination, ever screaming after new toys and then picking them to pieces to see what they were made of, with nothing satisfied.

Byron on one occasion said,

"What book is that?"

TRE.: The life of a Poet.

He looked at the last chapter, saying,

"If there is nothing in that, it's not worth reading."

TRE.: There is a birth, marriage, and death; a eulogy on the author's genius and tedious criticisms on his works; nothing of the individuality of the man.

BYRON: Literary lives are compiled for the bibliopolists, as puffs to sell their wares; they are nothing. When I die you will see mine, written by myself.

TRE.: Will it be published as you have written it?

BYRON: Yes; I leave it in safe hands—Tom Moore's. He is pledged to publish, and omit words, but not garble facts. I have good security—he always wants money; my memoirs will bring it.

The poet could not forecast that Moore would get the money and not publish the book; that his bibliopolist's compilation—all puff and laudation to sell his stock—would be substituted—a lifeless life, giving no notion of the author, nothing told as Byron told it, and, excepting the letters it contains, unreadable and unread. Byron could not escape the poet's fate—his true life suppressed, and a bookish, elaborate eulogy of his poetry to sell his works substituted. Tom Moore, by his keen wit and continual practice, had perfected himself in the art of flattery; in his hands it was a fine art, and pleased all tastes. He deluded Byron into the belief that he was a thoroughly fearless and independent man; that he cared nothing for the world, its censure or praise; whereas Moore was the slave of forms, ceremony, and etiquette, excessively tenacious, and spoke of the big houses he frequented as if he controlled them. Moore's life is published:

a sorry catalogue of lords, ladies, their dinners and parties. Where are they all? Vanished as shadows on the wall, "alms for oblivion." Moore will be remembered for his Irish melodies and his treachery in suppressing Byron's vindication of himself, particularly as he had read and approved of it and recommended the publication as necessary to prevent the fictitious slanders that might be spread after his death and that had been circulated during his life, and to set at rest the principal questions concerning his life. There was nothing in the memoirs that should have been omitted but the names of some people then living and some passages disconnected with his life. To these suggestions Byron readily assented.

What men say when two or three are gathered together in familiar talk I take no note of; they do not represent a man's deliberate sentiments. Byron never argued, said he could not. He admitted nothing and doubted everything; he had not made up his mind on any subject. His talk was in short sentences, generally in opposition. Mrs. Shelley quoting with approval a sentiment from an Italian writer, Byron dissented, with sneers, and jibes, and

irony. His reckless audacity and startling opinions made Mrs. Shelley stare. Shelley, absorbed in thought, said little, and when they left Byron she reproached her husband for not advocating his own opinions. She said,

"Could Byron mean what he said?"

Shelley answered,

"No, certainly not; Byron never is in earnest except in the morning, when he is talking to one person, with whom he is at his ease. I was with him at one o'clock. He told me he had been writing all night, and had had no food but biscuits for three days, but had taken strong stimulants. The long-continued strain on his nerves and brain, intensified by his capricious way of life, disorders his mind. He wants food and rest; he is feverish, and that makes him fitful."

MRS. SHELLEY:

"Great wit to madness nearly is allied."

In company Byron talked in Don Juan's vein; with a companion with whom he was familiar he thought aloud; with strangers, as others do, but not at his ease. I have said enough to show him as he was, a thoroughly spoilt man. Lady Byron

was equally spoilt in an opposite direction—self-willed, intolerant, jealous, and vindictive. She was a rigid Puritan: they are a brave and undaunted sect in self-reliance on their superiority over all other people, and fear nothing. Saints armed in righteousness prefer doing battle with great sinners, confident of their cause. Lady Byron, with the pertinacity of a zealot, plied the poet with holy texts from Scripture and moral maxims from pious writers. In his placid moments he submitted to the infliction; when her admonitions were out of season, and he was composing, or vexed with his own thoughts, he was not so passive. Most men, especially authors, are accustomed to pass their mornings in their studies, and are impatient of any intrusion, Byron excessively so. His wife, perhaps, thought that he was brooding mischief, and persistently interrupted him. He then would say things to shock and mortify her. She considered these self-accusations as his confessions, and took notes of them. Words spoken in the irritation of being interrupted were not allowed to sink into the ground, but registered, and produced in an evil hour as evidence to prove the poet was mad. This

was the principal source from which all the misunderstandings arose. The lawyers said it proved him bad, not mad. We are so constructed that praise, excepting it is administered in infinitesimal globules, corrupts us. Excessive praise, such as Byron had been deluged with, no man ever bore and preserved his equanimity. If any one bestows a universal benefit on his species, and merits universal admiration, he never receives it; our loudest applause is lavished on those who amuse our idle hours.

On the disruption of Byron's marriage, the obloquy was cast on the poet; envy and malice, that lurk beneath the smiling surface of society, rejoiced in the opportunity of giving vent to their slanders. Any woman who had been strongly attached to him, and who had ordinary sense and consideration, might have lived with the poet. His lameness confined him much to the house, and made him the slave of custom and habit. He was sorely vexed if they were broken, though in everything else he was exceptionally tolerant, and of an easy, careless disposition if left to his own devices. He rarely parted with anything he was accustomed to, however use-

less or troublesome it became. Any one could live with him, excepting an inflexible and dogmatic saint; not that he objected to his wife's piety, for he saw no harm in that, but her inflicting it on him. The lady's theory was opposed to this: her mission was to reform him by her example and teaching. She had a smattering of science, mathematics, and metaphysics—a toy pet from her childhood, idolized by her parents and considered as a phenomenon by her country neighbours.

Women, when young, are usually pliant, and readily adapt themselves to any changes. Lady Byron was not of this flexible type: she had made up her mind on all subjects, and reversed the saying of Socrates, that "all he had learnt was, he knew nothing." She thought she knew everything. She was exacting, capricious, resentful, excessively jealous, suspicious, and credulous. She only lived with him one year out of her long life. Byron was not demonstrative of things appertaining to himself, especially to women, and Lady Byron judged men by her father and the country neighbours, and Byron was so dissimilar to them in all his ways as to bewilder her. She would come into his study

when he was in the throes of composition, and finding he took no notice of her, say,

"Am I interrupting you?"

"Yes, most damnably."

This was to her a dreadful shock; he thought nothing of it; he had received his greater shock in being interrupted.

She married him from vanity, and he married her to retrieve his broken fortune. They were brought together by the usual medium, lady matchmakers. There was no sympathy in choice or love, and so they parted; and although the envy and malice of the world took her part against Byron, and no justification on her part was called for, her baffled hopes rankled in her mind. During her life she kept up a confidential correspondence and intimacy with Byron's half-sister, until her death, and then gave vent to her spleen, irrespective of the injury to some still living.

A lady I had known at Florence made a short stay at Genoa. She had known Lord and Lady Byron during the short time they had lived together. (This lady's husband had gone to Turin on professional business.) She enlightened me on the

vexed question of Byron's wife. She said the lady was a formal, pedantic prude, ill-looking, ill-dressed, and ill-mannered; that she was peevish and jealous, and generally disliked. That Byron, elated by his excessive popularity with the public, treated men cavalierly, but was affable enough to the women, and they clustered round him; the men were sorely vexed. "The news of his wife's leaving him they gave tongue to," as my husband told me, "like a pack of hounds, and would have hunted him to death. If women's voices could have been heard, they would have reversed the verdict of the men; in domestic differences they alone can see who is in the wrong."

I observed that women gained by marriage the liberty we lost. "As soon as they are free from durance, they try their hands on us."

"Lady Byron," observed the lady, "was not, as you call it, in durance; she is said to have ruled her parents, the parson, and the school of her parish."

I answered,

"The ancient poets were considered inspired; they were landmarks. The modern ones, shorn of

their divine attributes, are yet defiant of the laws and usages that ordinary mortals submit to. The great poet of the Puritans, Milton, on his wife's leaving him, published his own divorce, and Byron, on a similar occasion, acted as if divorced."

Having lent a friend, who was anxious to know the origin of the differences of Byron and his wife, a letter of Lady Byron's to read, these were his comments upon it:—

My dear Mr. Trelawny,

I return you, with very many thanks, the copy of Lady Byron's letter, which speaks volumes, and seems to me to be in itself the strongest evidence of that incompatibility of disposition which culminated in separation. With such a woman Byron could not have lived long, and I rejoice to have at length discovered the cause of their mutual disagreement. Nothing further is needed, and I much regret that you are unable to give this letter to the world as a check to calumniation.

Yours ever sincerely,

R. E.

Johnson, on being asked if marriage were natural to man, replied, "Sir, it is so far from being natural

for a man and woman to live in a state of marriage, that we find all the motives which they have for remaining in that connexion, and the restraints which society imposes to prevent separation, are hardly sufficient to keep them together." Those who have undergone the operation will acknowledge the truth of the sage's words.

Poets, like priests, have hosts of communicants, and should be sworn to celibacy. A catalogue of the domestic grievances of the poets and their wives, from the omniscient Shakespeare and solemn Milton, to scoffing Byron and the martyr Shelley, would show that men of imagination all compact are devoid of what women call domestic virtues—that is, propriety of conduct and submission to the conventional customs of the time. Byron says:—

> "But oh! ye lords of ladies intellectual
> Inform us truly, have they not hen-peck'd you all?"

and Shelley:—

> "With one chain'd friend, perhaps a jealous foe,
> The dreariest and the longest journey go."

Milton:—

> "Thus they in mutual accusation spent
> The fruitless hours, but neither self-condemning;
> And of their vain contest appear'd no end."

Shakespeare :—

> "As for my wife,
> I would you had her spirit in such another.
> The third o' the world is yours; which, with a snaffle,
> You may pace easy, but not such a wife."

Byron repeatedly told the story of his wife's leaving him on the plea of visiting her parents. They parted in the most friendly way, and she wrote him a playful and affectionate letter. He attributed much of the mischief to a confidential friend and maid that she had. She never returned, or assigned any reason for not doing so. She was disliked in society, from her prim and formal manners, and from assuming a moral superiority over the idle votaries of fashion, but when she parted from Byron all the envious and jealous saw that it was a good opportunity of damaging the reputation of the poet by exalting the merits of his wife. The higher they could elevate her, the lower would he sink in public estimation: so she was transformed into a suffering angel, and he covered with obloquy. Such is the envenomed malice of what is called good society. This was the cause of the turmoil made in London about so silly an affair, the real opinion remaining the same—they were all surprised that

Byron could have married such an iceberg. He, after the separation, used all the means in his power to induce his wife to give her reason, publicly or privately, for leaving him. She would not speak until death had silenced the voices that would have answered her. Ask any lawyer, or person in the habit of taking evidence, if woman's or man's is the most to be relied on. Forty years after his death his wife produces notes she had taken nearly half a century past, accusing her liege lord of a heinous offence. Mrs. Beecher Stowe, a New England Puritan of the deepest dye, is called into council, and these two pious and remorseless saints, after conferring, condemn the poet, and the stern Yankee lady puts on the black cap and passes sentence of death on the memory of a great man, without counsel being fee'd, or witnesses summoned on either side, and when all implicated are mouldering in their graves. If men's characters are to be thus summarily impugned and condemned, who is safe amongst the dead from being dragged from his grave and trailed in the mud as Cromwell was?

CHAPTER VI.

Few things surpass old wine; and they may preach
Who please, the more because they preach in vain.
Let us have wine and women, mirth and laughter,
Sermons and soda-water the day after.

DON JUAN.

BYRON has been accused of drinking deeply. Our universities, certainly, did turn out more famous drinkers than scholars. In the good old times, to drink lustily was the characteristic of all Englishmen, just as tuft-hunting is now. Eternal swilling, and the rank habits and braggadocio manners which it engendered, came to a climax in George IV.'s reign. Since then, excessive drinking has gone out of fashion, but an elaborate style of gastronomy has come in to fill up the void; so there is not much gained. Byron used to boast of the quantity of wine he had drunk. He said, "We young Whigs imbibed claret, and so saved our

constitutions: the Tories stuck to port, and destroyed theirs and their country's."

He bragged, too, of his prowess in riding, boxing, fencing, and even walking; but to excel in these things feet are as necessary as hands. In the water a fin is better than a foot, and in that element he did well; he was built for floating,—with a flexible body, open chest, broad beam, and round limbs. If the sea were smooth and warm, he would stay in it for hours; but as he seldom indulged in this sport, and when he did, over-exerted himself, he suffered severely; which observing, and knowing how deeply he would be mortified at being beaten, I had the magnanimity when contending with him to give in.

He had a misgiving in his mind that I was trifling with him; and one day as we were on the shore, and the 'Bolivar' at anchor, about three miles off, he insisted on our trying conclusions; we were to swim to the yacht, dine in the sea alongside of her, treading water the while, and then to return to the shore. It was calm and hot, and seeing he would not be fobbed off, we started. I reached the boat a long time before he did; ordered the edibles to

be ready, and floated until he arrived. We ate our fare leisurely, from off a grating that floated alongside, drank a bottle of ale, and I smoked a cigar, which he tried to extinguish,—as he never smoked. We then put about, and struck off towards the shore. We had not got a hundred yards on our passage, when he retched violently, and, as that is often followed by cramp, I urged him to put his hand on my shoulder that I might tow him back to the schooner.

"Keep off, you villain, don't touch me. I'll drown ere I give in."

I answered as Iago did to Rodrigo,

"'A fig for drowning! drown cats and blind puppies.' I shall go on board and try the effects of a glass of grog to stay my stomach."

"Come on," he shouted, "I am always better after vomiting."

With difficulty I deluded him back; I went on board, and he sat on the steps of the accommodation-ladder, with his feet in the water. I handed him a wine-glass of brandy, and screened him from the burning sun. He was in a sullen mood, but after a time resumed his usual tone. Nothing could

induce him to be landed in the schooner's boat, though I protested I had had enough of the water.

"You may do as you like," he called out, and plumped in, and we swam on shore.

He never afterwards alluded to this event, nor to his prowess in swimming, to me, except in the past tense. He was ill, and kept his bed for two days afterwards.

He said abruptly to me one day,

"I have been reading of men's sufferings after a wreck; they were nothing to what I have gone through in a country house, imprisoned with a family of Puritans, the only divertisement prayers and discourses on propriety and morality. A wreck must stir the blood, mine stagnated. How far have you ever swum?"

TRE.: Eight knots, and I was five hours in the water off the coast of Patagonia. The heave of the sea was in my favour, there was no wind, and the water was tepid. Two others with me were drowned; it's cold that kills.

BYRON: I'll have a tussle with you.

A year after I reminded him of this at Ithaca, and proposed to cross the strait to Cephalonia. He

said it was too late in the day, and the sea too cold. I was in the water.

BYRON, in a cautious voice: We shan't wait four hours for you; they are waiting for us on the other side.

So I got into the boat. I challenged him without considering his inability to use his lower limbs, his soft and shrunken muscles. He was subject to cramp and spasms.

To return to his drinking propensities, after this digression about his gymnastic prowess: I must say, that of all his vauntings, it was, luckily for him, the emptiest—that is, after he left England and his boon companions, as I know nothing of what he did there. From all that I heard or witnessed of his habits abroad, he was and had been exceedingly abstemious in eating and drinking. When alone, he drank a glass or two of small claret or hock, and when utterly exhausted at night a single glass of grog; which when I mixed it for him I lowered to what sailors call "water bewitched," and he never made any remark. I once, to try him, omitted the alcohol; he then said, "Tre, have you not forgotten the creature comfort?" I then put in two

spoonfuls, and he was satisfied. This does not look like an habitual toper. His English acquaintances in Italy were, he said in derision, all milksops. On the rare occasions of any of his former friends visiting him, he would urge them to have a carouse with him, but they had grown wiser. He used to say that little Tommy Moore was the only man he then knew who stuck to the bottle and put him on his mettle, adding, "But he is a native of the damp isle, where men subsist by suction."

Byron had not damaged his body by strong drinks, but his terror of getting fat was so great that he reduced his diet to the point of absolute starvation. He was of that soft, lymphatic temperament which it is almost impossible to keep within a moderate compass, particularly as in his case his lameness prevented his taking exercise. When he added to his weight, even standing was painful, so he resolved to keep down to eleven stone, or shoot himself. He said everything he swallowed was instantly converted into tallow and deposited on his ribs.

He was the only human being I ever met with who had sufficient self-restraint and resolution to

resist this proneness to fatten: he did so; and at Genoa, where he was last weighed, he was ten stone and nine pounds, and looked much less. This was not from vanity about his personal appearance, but from a better motive; and as, like Justice Greedy, he was always hungry, his merit was the greater. Occasionally he relaxed his vigilance, when he swelled apace.

I remember one of his old friends saying, "Byron, how well you are looking!" If he had stopped there it had been well, but when he added, "You are getting fat," Byron's brow reddened, and his eyes flashed—"Do you call getting fat looking well, as if I were a hog?" and, turning to me, he muttered, "The beast, I can hardly keep my hands off him." The man who thus offended him was the husband of the lady addressed as 'Genevra,' and the original of his 'Zuleika,' in the 'Bride of Abydos.' I don't think he had much appetite for his dinner that day, or for many days, and never forgave the man who, so far from wishing to offend, intended to pay him a compliment.

Byron said he had tried all sorts of experiments

to stay his hunger, without adding to his bulk. "I swelled," he said, "at one time to fourteen stone, so I clapped the muzzle on my jaws, and, like the hybernating animals, consumed my own fat."

He would exist on biscuits and soda-water for days together, then, to allay the eternal hunger gnawing at his vitals, he would make up a horrid mess of cold potatoes, rice, fish, or greens, deluged in vinegar, and swallow it like a famished dog. Either of these unsavoury dishes, with a biscuit and a glass or two of Rhine wine, he cared not how sour, he called feasting sumptuously. Upon my observing he might as well have fresh fish and vegetables, instead of stale, he laughed and answered,

"I have an advantage over you—I have no palate; one thing is as good as another to me."

"Nothing," I said, "disagrees with the natural man, he fasts and gorges, his nerves and brains don't bother him; but if you wish to live——"

"Who wants to live?" he replied, "not I. The Byrons are a short-lived race on both sides, father and mother: longevity is hereditary: I am nearly at the end of my tether. I don't care

for death a damn: it is her sting I can't bear,—pain."

His habits and want of exercise damaged him, not drink. It must be borne in mind, moreover, that his brain was always working at high pressure. The consequences resulting from his way of life were low or intermittent fevers; these last had fastened on him in his early travels in the Levant; and there is this peculiarity in malaria fevers, that if you have once had them, you are ever after peculiarly susceptible to a renewal of their attacks if within their reach, and Byron was hardly ever out of it. Venice and Ravenna are belted in with swamps, and fevers are rife in the autumn. By starving his body Byron kept his brains clear; no man had brighter eyes or a clearer voice; and his resolute bearing and prompt replies, when excited, gave to his body an appearance of muscular power that imposed on strangers. I never doubted, for he was indifferent to life, and prouder than Lucifer, that if he had drawn his sword in Greece, or elsewhere, he would have thrown away the scabbard.

Mrs. Shelley once observed of Byron, "Mind what you say to him, he is a thorough blab; in

his anxiety to cut a good figure he makes others cut a bad one, as most people do."

TRE.: Is it safe to act on his suggestions?

MRS. SHELLEY: They are not his, but yours; you have kindled the fire; if you don't watch, someone will throw cold water and put it out, or if you go away it will burn out.

SHELLEY: Your fresh energy and promptness are catching to a vacillating mind; he has no decision of character, he has not made up his mind, and cannot on any subject whatever. (Then standing and holding out his arms, with an expression of astonishment mingled with sorrow, he shrieked out) By what he said last night in talking over his 'Cain,' the best of all his undramatic dramas, I do believe, Mary (and here the poet paused to take breath, reluctant to expose his friend's weakness), I do believe, Mary, that he is little better than a Christian!

MRS. SHELLEY: Hogg says that all poets are madmen, and that they should be confined in Bedlam.

SHELLEY: If Byron were inspired with Socrates' divine madness, he would eclipse all he has yet

done; his faculties are dimmed by the pernicious platitudes of his London visitors.

MRS. SHELLEY: His friends are amongst the great men of the day.

TRE.: Do the men of the day outlive the day—what becomes of them?

SHELLEY: They go with the day into night, darkness, oblivion.

The Poet then vanished.

TRE.: These men, who loom large in the distance, are small when you come near them; but the national song-writer, Tom Moore, and the national story-teller, Scott, will never be forgotten, for songs and tales are the earliest history of every country. Byron is as perverse as a woman. Positiveness and dogmatism irritate him; he says nothing is certain, and so he believes nothing. Shelley's earnest convictions he delights in opposing. Riding with him yesterday, to humour his incredulity, I observed to him I felt something like water running down my face, that I thought it might be raining. He perceiving my drift, looking triumphant at me, said, "You grinned at me when I sent back my servant for my riding-cloak; you said it was certain

not to rain, it had not rained for six weeks; now you are paying for your certainty!"

In after talk with Byron, I mentioned Shelley's alarm at his backsliding; he smilingly observed, "It's all nonsense, it was to make the Snake's crest rise and shake his rattles. If I follow his counsel I shall be where he is."

TRE.: Shelley says you should write for posterity.

BYRON: No one has ever done so—why should I? It is all cant to say they did.

During the time I knew Byron, he never talked seriously and confidentially with any person but Shelley. Shelley was disconnected from all Byron's set, and from everyone that he knew, besides being a far superior scholar. On any of his London old comrades paying him a flying visit, he suspected their mission was to observe, and that what they saw and heard would be circulated with comments, so he flared up and resumed his former dare-devil and vaunting, averting all serious talk by irony and bantering. They too were on their guard, from Byron's habit of telling people what was said of them. He had a habit of parrying questions by putting cross questions to those who questioned

him, and often not very pleasant ones. He never had them staying in his house, riding if they chose with him and dining. He always, on these occasions, got Shelley if he could, but to him it was exceedingly distasteful, as there was never any topic of the slightest interest to him—deaths, elopements, marriages, scandal, &c., &c.—but Shelley had in perfection the power of closing his senses of hearing and seeing, and taking refuge within his own mind. He often left the company without exchanging a word with the guest he had been invited to meet; the instant there was an opening, like a wild animal he was off, and rushed along the Lung' Arno to his den.

CHAPTER VII.

O thou, who plumed with strong desire
Would'st float above the earth, beware!
A shadow tracks thy flight of fire—
Night is coming!
The Two Spirits.—SHELLEY.

The enquiry in England is not whether a man has talents or genius, but whether he is passive and polite, and a virtuous ass, and obedient to noblemen's opinions in art and science. If he is, he is a good man; if not, he must be starved.—WILLIAM BLAKE.

IN the annals of authors I cannot find one who wrote under so many discouragements as Shelley; for even Bunyan's dungeon walls echoed the cheers of hosts of zealous disciples on the outside, whereas Shelley could number his readers on his fingers. He said, "I can only print my writings by stinting myself in food!" Published, or sold openly, they were not.

He had thirty copies printed of "Queen Mab" to give to his acquaintances; the printer cut his

own name from all the copies to prevent prosecution. This poem was partly written at the early age of eighteen, and printed before he was twenty-one.

The utter loneliness in which he was condemned to pass the largest portion of his life would have paralysed any brains less subtilized by genius than his were. Yet he was social and cheerful, and, although frugal himself, most liberal to others, while to serve a friend he was ever ready to make any sacrifice. It was, perhaps, fortunate he was known to so few, for those few kept him close shorn. He went to Ravenna in 1821 on Byron's business, and, writing to his wife, makes this comment on the Pilgrim's asking him to execute a delicate commission:—"But it seems destined that I am always to have some active part in the affairs of everybody whom I approach." And so he had.

Every day I passed some hours with Byron, and very often my evenings with Shelley and Williams, so that when my memory summons one of them to appear, the others are sure to follow in his wake. If Byron's reckless frankness and apparent cordiality warmed your feelings, his sensitiveness,

irritability, and the perverseness of his temper, cooled them. I was not then thirty, and the exigencies of my now full-blown vanities were unsated, and my credulity unexhausted. I believed in many things then, and believe in some now; I could not sympathize with Byron, who believed in nothing.

"As for love, friendship, and your *entusamusy*," said he, "they must run their course. If you are not hanged or drowned before you are forty, you will wonder at all the foolish things they have made you say and do,—as I do now."

"I will go over to the Shelleys," I answered, "and hear their opinions on the subject."

"Ay, the Snake has fascinated you; I am for making a man of the world of you; they will mould you into a Frankenstein monster: so good night!"

Göthe's Mephistopheles calls the serpent that tempted Eve, "My Aunt—the renowned snake;" and as Shelley translated and repeated passages of "Faust"—to impregnate, as he said, Byron's brain,—when he came to that passage, "My Aunt, the renowned snake," Byron said, "Then you are her nephew," and henceforth he often called Shelley

the Snake; his bright eyes, slim figure, and noiseless movements, strengthened, if they did not suggest, the comparison. Byron's wit or humour might force a grim smile, or hollow laugh, from the standers by, but they savoured more of pain than playfulness, and made you dissatisfied with yourself and him. When I left his gloomy hall, and the echoes of the heavy iron-plated door died away, I could hardly refrain from shouting with joy as I hurried along the broad-flagged terrace which overhangs the pleasant river, cheered on my course by the cloudless sky, soft air, and fading light, which close an Italian day.

After a hasty dinner at my albergo, I hastened along the Arno to the hospitable and cheerful abode of the Shelleys. There I found those sympathies and sentiments which the Pilgrim denounced as illusions believed in as the only realities.

Shelley's mental activity was infectious; he kept your brain in constant action. Its effect on his comrade was very striking. Williams gave up all his accustomed sports for books, and the bettering of his mind; he had excellent natural ability; and the Poet delighted to see the seeds he had sown,

germinating. Shelley said he was the sparrow educating the young of the cuckoo. After a protracted labour, Ned was delivered of a five-act play. Shelley was sanguine that his pupil would succeed as a dramatic writer. One morning I was in Mrs. Williams's drawing-room, by appointment, to hear Ned read an act of his drama. I sat with an aspect as caustic as a critic who was to decide his fate. Whilst thus intent Shelley stood before us with a most woeful expression.

Mrs. Williams started up, exclaiming, "What's the matter, Percy?"

"Mary has threatened me."

"Threatened you with what?"

He looked mysterious and too agitated to reply.

Mrs. Williams repeated, "With what? to box your ears?"

"Oh, much worse than that; Mary says she will have a party; there are English singers here, the Sinclairs, and she will ask them, and everyone she or you know—oh, the horror!"

We all burst into a laugh except his friend Ned.

"It will kill me."

"Music, kill you!" said Mrs. Williams. "Why,

you have told me, you flatterer, that you loved music."

"So I do. It's the company terrifies me. For pity go to Mary and intercede for me; I will submit to any other species of torture than that of being bored to death by idle ladies and gentlemen."

After various devices it was resolved that Ned Williams should wait upon the lady,—he being gifted with a silvery tongue, and sympathizing with the Poet in his dislike of fine ladies,—and see what he could do to avert the threatened invasion of the Poet's solitude. Meanwhile Shelley remained in a state of restless ecstasy: he could not even read or sit. Ned returned with a grave face; the Poet stood as a criminal stands at the bar, whilst the solemn arbitrator of his fate decides it. "The lady," commenced Ned, "has set her heart on having a party, and will not be baulked;" but, seeing the Poet's despair, he added, "it is to be limited to those here assembled, and some of Count Gamba's family; and instead of a musical feast—as we have no souls—we are to have a dinner." The Poet hopped off, rejoicing, making a noise I

should have thought whistling, but that he was ignorant of that accomplishment.

I have seen Shelley and Byron in society, and the contrast was as marked as their characters. The former, not thinking of himself, was as much at ease as in his own home, omitting no occasion of obliging those whom he came in contact with, readily conversing with all or any who addressed him, irrespective of age or rank, dress or address. To the first party I went with Byron, as we were on our road, he said,

"It's so long since I have been in English society, you must tell me what are their present customs. Does rank lead the way, or does the ambassadress pair us off into the dining-room? Do they ask people to wine? Do we exit with the women, or stick to our claret?"

On arriving, he was flushed, over-ceremonious, and ill at ease. He had learnt his manners, as I have said, during the Regency, when society was more exclusive than even now, and consequently more vulgar.

To know an author, personally, is too often but to destroy the illusion created by his works; if you

withdraw the veil of your idol's sanctuary, and see him in his night-cap, you discover a querulous old crone, a sour pedant, a supercilious coxcomb, a servile tuft-hunter, a saucy snob, or at best, an ordinary mortal. Instead of the high-minded seeker after truth and abstract knowledge, with a nature too refined to bear the vulgarities of life, as we had imagined, we find him full of egotism and vanity, and eternally fretting and fuming about trifles. As a general rule, therefore, it is wise to avoid writers whose works amuse or delight you, for when you see them they will delight you no more. Shelley was a grand exception to this rule. To form a just idea of his poetry, you should have witnessed his daily life; his words and actions best illustrated his writings. If his glorious conception of Gods and men constituted an atheist, I am afraid all that listened were little better. Sometimes he would run through a great work on science, condense the author's laboured exposition, and by substituting simple words for the jargon of the schools, make the most abstruse subject transparent. The cynic Byron acknowledged him to be the best and ablest man he had ever known. The truth was,

Shelley loved everything better than himself. Self-preservation is, they say, the first law of nature, with him it was the last; and the only pain he ever gave his friends arose from the utter indifference with which he treated everything concerning himself. I was bathing one day in a deep pool in the Arno, and astonished the Poet by performing a series of aquatic gymnastics, which I had learnt from the natives of the South Seas. On my coming out, whilst dressing, Shelley said, mournfully,

"Why can't I swim? it seems so very easy."

I answered, "Because you think you can't. If you determine, you will; take a header off this bank, and when you rise turn on your back, you will float like a duck; but you must reverse the arch in your spine, for it's now bent the wrong way."

He doffed his jacket and trowsers, kicked off his shoes and socks, and plunged in; and there he lay stretched out on the bottom like a conger eel, not making the least effort or struggle to save himself. He would have been drowned if I had not instantly fished him out. When he recovered his breath, he said,

"I always find the bottom of the well, and they

say Truth lies there. In another minute I should have found it, and you would have found an empty shell. It is an easy way of getting rid of the body."

TRE.: "'What is truth?' said jesting Pilate, and would not stay for an answer." What does Bacon mean by that?

SHELLEY: The truth is a jest; no one has found it.

TRE.: That is why the wise men say they know nothing. Bacon might have exposed the great lies.

SHELLEY: If we had known the great truths, they would have laid bare the great lies.

TRE.: What do they mean by the great truths?

SHELLEY: They cannot calculate time, measure distance, or say what is above or what is below us.

"What is life? What is death? What are we?"

TRE.: The knaves are the cleverest; they profess to know everything; the fools believe them, and so they govern the world.

SHELLEY: Science has done something and will do more; astronomy is working above, and geo-

logy below, and chemistry is seeking truth. In another century or two we shall make a beginning; at present we are playing the game of blind man's buff, struggling to clutch truth.

TRE.: What would Mrs. Shelley have said to me if I had gone back with your empty cage?

"Don't tell Mary—not a word!" he rejoined, and then continued, "It's a great temptation; in another minute I might have been in another planet, if old women's tales were true."

"But as you always find the bottom," I observed, "you might have sunk 'deeper than did ever plummet sound.' Do you believe in the immortality of the spirit?"

"Certainly not; how can I? We know nothing; we have no evidence; we cannot express our inmost thoughts. They are incomprehensible even to ourselves."

"Why," I asked, "do you call yourself an atheist? it annihilates you in this world."

"It is a word of abuse to stop discussion, a painted devil to frighten the foolish, a threat to intimidate the wise and good. I used it to express my abhorrence of superstition; I took up the word,

as a knight took up a gauntlet, in defiance of injustice. The delusions of Christianity are fatal to genius and originality: they limit thought."

Shelley's thirst for knowledge was unquenchable. He set to work on a book, or a pyramid of books; his eyes glistening with an energy as fierce as that of the most sordid gold-digger who works at a rock of quartz, crushing his way through all impediments, no grain of the pure ore escaping his eager scrutiny. I called on him one morning at ten, he was in his study with a German folio open, resting on the broad marble mantelpiece, over an old-fashioned fire-place, and with a dictionary in his hand. He always read standing if possible. He had promised over night to go with me, but now begged me to let him off. I then rode to Leghorn, eleven or twelve miles distant, and passed the day there; on returning at six in the evening to dine with Mrs. Shelley and the Williamses, as I had engaged to do, I went into the Poet's room and found him exactly in the position in which I had left him in the morning, but looking pale and exhausted.

"Well," I said, "have you found it?"

Shutting the book and going to the window, he replied, "No, I have lost it:" with a deep sigh: "'I have lost a day.'"

"Cheer up, my lad, and come to dinner."

Putting his long fingers through his masses of wild tangled hair, he answered faintly, "You go, I have dined—late eating don't do for me."

"What is this?" I asked, as I was going out of the room, pointing to one of his bookshelves with a plate containing bread and cold meat on it.

"That,"—colouring,—"why that must be my dinner. It's very foolish; I thought I had eaten it."

Saying I was determined that he should for once have a regular meal, I lugged him into the dining-room, but he brought a book with him and read more than he ate. He seldom ate at stated periods, but only when hungry—and then like the birds, if he saw something edible lying about,—but the cupboards of literary ladies are like Mother Hubbard's, bare. His drink was water, or milk if he could get it, bread was literally his staff of life; other things he thought superfluous. An Italian

who knew his way of life, not believing it possible that any human being would live as Shelley did, unless compelled by poverty, was astonished when he was told the amount of his income, and thought he was defrauded or grossly ignorant of the value of money. He, therefore, made a proposition which much amused the Poet, that he, the friendly Italian, would undertake for ten thousand crowns a-year to keep Shelley like a grand Seigneur, to provide his table with luxuries, his house with attendants, a carriage and opera-box for my lady, besides adorning his person after the most approved Parisian style. Mrs. Shelley's toilette was not included in the wily Italian's estimates. The fact was, Shelley stinted himself to bare necessaries, and then often lavished the money, saved by unprecedented self-denial, on selfish fellows who denied themselves nothing; such as the great philosopher had in his eye, when he said, "It is the nature of extreme self-lovers, as they will set a house on fire, an' it were only to roast their own eggs."

Byron, on our voyage to Greece, talking of England, after commenting on his own wrongs, said, "And Shelley, too, the best and most benevolent

of men; they hooted him out of his country like a mad-dog, for questioning a dogma. Man is the same rancorous beast now that he was from the beginning, and if the Christ they profess to worship reappeared, they would again crucify him."

CHAPTER VIII.

Where the pine its garland weaves
Of sapless green and ivy dun,
Round stems that never kiss the sun,
Where the lawns and pastures be
And the sand-hills of the sea.

The Invitation.—SHELLEY.

BYRON'S literary was, like Alexander's military career, one great triumph; but whilst he was at the zenith of his popularity, he railed against the world's injustice. I suppose, by the "world" he meant no more than the fashionable set he had seen squeezed together in a drawing-room; and, by all the press that attacked him, the fraction of it which took its tone from some small but active clique: as to friends deserting him, that could not be, for it was his boast that he never had attempted to make any after his school hallucinations. But in the pride of his strength, and the audacity of his youth, enemies he certainly did make, and

when they saw an opportunity of getting rid of a supercilious rival, they instinctively took advantage of it. As to the Poet's differences with his wife, they must have appeared absurd to men who were as indifferent to their own wives as were the majority of Byron's enemies.

When the most worldly wise and unimpassioned marry, they take a leap in the dark, and can no more foresee the consequences, than poets,—owls blinded by the light of their vain imaginations. The worldly wise, not having risked or anticipated much, stand to their bargain "for better, for worse," and say nothing about it; but the irascible tribe of songsters, when they find that marriage is not exactly what they imagined it to be, "proclaim their griefs from the house-top," as Byron did.

Very pretty books have been written on the "Loves of the Angels," and "Loves of the Poets," and Love universal—but when lovers are paired and caged together in holy matrimony, the curtain is dropped, and we hear no more of them. It may be, they moult their feathers and lose their song. Byron's marriage must not be classed with those of the Poets, but of the worldly wise, he was not

under the illusion of love, but of money. If he had left his wife and cut society (the last he was resolved on doing), he would have been content: that his wife and society should have cast him off, was a mortification his pride could never forgive nor forget. As to the oft vexed question of the Poet's separation from his wife, he has told the facts in prose and verse; but omitted to state that he treated women as things devoid of soul or sense; he would not eat, pray, walk, nor talk seriously with them. Within certain degrees of affinity marriages are forbidden; so they should be where there is no natural affinity of feelings, habits, tastes, or sympathies. It is very kind in the saints to ally themselves to sinners, but in ninety-nine cases out of one hundred, it turns out a failure; in Byron's case, it was signally so.

In all the transactions of his life, his anxiety to cut a good figure made him unjust to others. In fact, his pride mastered him, and he made no effort to conceal or to control its dominion, reckless how it marred his worldly advantages. Amidst the general homage paid to his genius, his vanity reverted to his early disappointments, when he was baffled and

compelled to fly, and though Parthian-like he discharged his arrows on his pursuers, he lost the battle.

Shelley had a far loftier spirit. His pride was spiritual. When attacked, he neither fled nor stood at bay, nor altered his course, but calmly went on with heart and mind intent on elevating his species. Whilst men tried to force him down to their level, he toiled to draw their minds upwards. His words were, "I always go on until I am stopped, and I never am stopped." Like the Indian palms, Shelley never flourished far from water. When compelled to take up his quarters in a town, he every morning, with the instinct that guides the water-birds, fled to the nearest lake, river, or sea-shore, and only returned to roost at night. If debarred from this, he sought out the most solitary place. Towns and crowds distracted him. Even the silent and half-deserted cities of Italy, with their temples, palaces, paintings and sculpture, could not make him stay, if there was a wood or water within his reach. At Pisa, he had a river under his window, and a pine forest in the neighbourhood.

I accompanied Mrs. Shelley to this wood in search

of the Poet, on one of those brilliant spring mornings we on the wrong side of the Alps are so rarely blessed with. A calèche took us out of Pisa through the gate of the Cascine; we drove through the Cascine and onwards for two or three miles, traversing the vineyards and farms on the Grand Ducal estate. On approaching some farm buildings, near which were a hunting-palace and chapel, we dismissed the carriage, directing the driver to meet us at a certain spot in the afternoon. We then walked on, not exactly knowing what course to take, and were exceedingly perplexed on coming to an open space, from which four roads radiated. There we stopped until I learnt from a Contadino that the one before us led directly to the sea, which was two or three miles distant, the one on the right led to the Serchio, and that on the left, to the Arno: we decided on taking the road to the sea. We proceeded on our journey over a sandy plain; the sun being near its zenith. Walking was not included among the number of accomplishments in which Mrs. Shelley excelled; the loose sand and hot sun soon knocked her up. When we got under the cool canopy of the pines, she stopped and allowed me to

hunt for her husband. I now strode along; the forest was on my right hand and extensive pastures on my left, with herds of oxen, camels, and horses grazing thereon. I came upon the open sea at a place called Gombo, from whence I could see Via Reggio, the Gulf of Spezzia, and the mountains beyond. After bathing, seeing nothing of the Poet, I penetrated the densest part of the forest, ever and anon making the woods ring with the name of Shelley, and scaring the herons and water-birds from the chain of stagnant pools which impeded my progress.

With no landmarks to guide me, nor sky to be seen above, I was bewildered in this wilderness of pines and ponds; so I sat down, struck a light, and smoked a cigar. A red man would have known his course by the trees themselves, their growth, form, and colour; or if a footstep had passed that day, he would have hit upon its trail. As I mused upon his sagacity and my own stupidity, the braying of a brother jackass startled me. He was followed by an old man picking up pine cones. I asked him if he had seen a stranger?

"L'Inglese malinconico haunts the wood maledetta. I will show you his nest."

As we advanced, the ground swelled into mounds and hollows. By-and-by the old fellow pointed with his stick to a hat, books, and loose papers lying about, and then to a deep pool of dark glimmering water, saying "Eccolo!" I thought he meant that Shelley was in or under the water. The careless, not to say impatient, way in which the Poet bore his burden of life, caused a vague dread amongst his family and friends that he might lose or cast it away at any moment.

The strong light streamed through the opening of the trees. One of the pines, undermined by the water, had fallen into it. Under its lea, and nearly hidden, sat the Poet, gazing on the dark mirror beneath, so lost in his bardish reverie that he did not hear my approach. There the trees were stunted and bent, and their crowns were shorn like friars by the sea breezes, excepting a cluster of three, under which Shelley's traps were lying; these overtopped the rest. To avoid startling the Poet out of his dream, I squatted under the lofty trees, and opened his books. One was a volume of his favourite Greek dramatist, Æschylus—the same that I found in his pocket after death—and the other was

a volume of Shakespeare. I then hailed him, and, turning his head, he answered faintly,

"Hollo, come in."

"Is this your study?" I asked.

"Yes," he answered, "and these trees are my books—they tell no lies. In composing one's faculties must not be divided; in a house there is no solitude: a door shutting, a footstep heard, a bell ringing, a voice, causes an echo in your brain and dissolves your visions."

I said: "Here you have the river rushing by you, the birds chattering and the beasts bellowing."

He answered: "The river flows by like Time, and all the sounds of Nature harmonize; they soothe: it is only the human animal that is discordant with Nature and disturbs me. It is difficult to conceive why or for what purpose we are here, a perpetual torment to ourselves and to every living thing. You are sitting on the stool of inspiration," he exclaimed. "In those three pines the weird sisters are imprisoned, and this," pointing to the water, "is their cauldron of black broth. The Pythian priestesses uttered their oracles from below—now they are muttered from above. Listen to the solemn music in

the pine-tops—don't you hear the mournful murmurings of the sea? Sometimes they rave and roar, shriek and howl, like a rabble of priests. In a tempest, when a ship sinks, they catch the despairing groans of the drowning mariners. Their chorus is the eternal wailing of wretched men."

"They, like the world," I observed, "seem to take no note of wretched women. The sighs and wailing you talk about are not those of wretched men afar off, but are breathed by a woman near at hand—not from the pine-tops, but by a forsaken lady."

"What do you mean?" he asked.

"Why, that an hour or two ago I left your wife, Mary Shelley, at the entrance of this grove, in despair at not finding you."

He started up, snatched up his scattered books and papers, thrust them into his hat and jacket pockets, sighing, "Poor Mary! hers is a sad fate. Come along; she can't bear solitude, nor I society —the quick coupled with the dead."

He glided along with his usual swiftness, for nothing could make him pause for an instant when he had an object in view, until he had attained it. On

hearing our voices, Mrs. Shelley joined us. To stop Shelley's self-reproaches, or to hide her own emotions, she began in a bantering tone, chiding and coaxing him,

"What a wild goose you are, Percy; if my thoughts have strayed from my book, it was to the opera, and my new dress from Florence—and especially the ivy wreath so much admired for my hair, and not to you, you silly fellow! When I left home, my satin slippers had not arrived. These are serious matters to gentlewomen, enough to ruffle the serenest tempered. As to you and your ungallant companion, I had forgotten that such things are; but as it is the ridiculous custom to have men at balls and operas, I must take you with me, though, from your uncouth ways, you will be taken for Valentine and he for Orson."

Shelley, like other students, would, when the spell that bound his faculties was broken, shut his books, and indulge in the wildest flights of mirth and folly. As this is a sport all can join in, we talked and laughed, and shrieked and shouted, as we emerged from under the shadows of the melancholy pines and their nodding plumes, into the now cool

purple twilight and open country. The cheerful and graceful peasant girls, returning home from the vineyards and olive groves, stopped to look at us. The old man I had met in the morning gathering pine-cones passed hurriedly by with his donkey, giving Shelley a wide berth, and evidently thinking that the melancholy Englishman had now become a raving maniac. Sancho says, "Blessings on the man who invented sleep;" the man who invented laughing deserves no less.

The day I found Shelley in the pine-forest he was writing verses on a guitar. I picked up a fragment, but could only make out the first two lines:—

> "Ariel to Miranda: Take
> This slave of music."

It was a frightful scrawl; words smeared out with his finger, and one upon the other, over and over in tiers, and all run together "in most admired disorder;" it might have been taken for a sketch of a marsh overgrown with bulrushes, and the blots for wild ducks; such a dashed-off daub as self-conceited artists mistake for a manifestation of genius. On my observing this to him, he answered,

"When my brain gets heated with thought, it

soon boils, and throws off images and words faster than I can skim them off. In the morning, when cooled down, out of the rude sketch, as you justly call it, I shall attempt a drawing. If you ask me why I publish what few or none will care to read, it is that the spirits I have raised haunt me until they are sent to the devil of a printer. All authors are anxious to breech their bantlings."

When I first knew Shelley, I met an old friend and his wife walking by the Arno. I said to Shelley,

"That man was a gay, frank, and cheerful companion; a widow immeshed him as a spider ensnares a fly and sucks his blood. She is jealous and torments him; when I remonstrated with her, she said it was excess of love made her so."

Shelley answered,

"Love is not akin to jealousy; love does not seek its own pleasure, but the happiness of another. Jealousy is gross selfishness; it looks upon everyone who approaches as an enemy: it's the idolatry of self, and, like canine madness, incurable."

His eyes flashed as he spoke. I did not then know that the green-eyed monster haunted his own house.

CHAPTER IX.

So as we rode, we talked; and the swift thought
Winging itself with laughter, lingered not,
But flew from brain to brain.

SHELLEY.

There are several kinds of divine madness. That which proceeds from the Muses' taking possession of a tender and unoccupied soul, awakening and bacchically inspiring it towards songs and other poetry, adorning myriads of ancient deeds, instructs succeeding generations; but he who, without this madness from the Muses, approaches the poetical gates, having persuaded himself that by art alone he may become sufficiently a Poet, will find in the end his own imperfection, and see the poetry of his cold prudence vanish into nothingness before the light of that which has sprung from divine insanity.—SOCRATES.

AT 10 a.m. by appointment I drove to Shelley's house and hailed him; he was always prompt as a seaman in a squall, and rushing downstairs, was brought to by his wife on the first landing:—

"Percy, do change your cap and jacket; you promised Tre to call on his Yankee girl and Highland beauty at Leghorn. Caterina! bring down the padrone's coat and hat."

The Poet, reluctantly submitting, muttered,

"Our bones should be outside, or our skins as tough as alligators'; the thing you have put on my head feels like a crown of thorns, and the ligature round my throat a halter. I bear what I can, and suffer what I must."

No personal vexations could extort harsher words than these from him, and he often used them. To avoid any further manipulation he sprang down the stairs, and striding adroitly over a fair fat child squatting on the doorstep beside its nurse, stepped into my chaise at the door. The child cried.

SHELLEY:

> "When we are born, we cry that we are come
> To this great stage of fools."

TRE.: Whose child is it?

POET (looking at it): Don't know.

MRS. SHELLEY (from open casement): That's too bad, not to know your own child. Why, you goose, it is Percy!

TRE.: You are not the wise man who knows his own child.

SHELLEY: The wise men have none.

TRE.: Those wise men must be in the moon; there are few such on the earth.

As we turned off the Lung' Arno, a friendly puff of wind relieved the Poet of his obnoxious head-gear, and the hat trundled along. I stopped the horse.

SHELLEY: Oh, don't stop! It will get into the river and I shall find it at Leghorn.

TRE.: That will depend on wind and current.

Two Florentine gentlemen ran and picked it up, wiped the dust off, and brought it to us.

SHELLEY: They say that beavers are nearly exterminated; if hats go too, I cannot mourn for them.

Outside of the Port, on the Leghorn road, half-a-dozen small children were clustered round a ruined building, tormenting a family of beautiful bright green-and-gold coloured lizards.

SHELLEY: The young demons!

TRE.: You are blaspheming, for is it not said, "Of such is the kingdom of heaven"? Children, until restrained, kill everything that runs from them; but if a beetle or a mouse moves towards them they fly in terror: cruel and cowardly; and that is the nature of man.

SHELLEY: He is in process of training.

TRE.: It is very slow.

SHELLEY: The animals that subsist on herbs are docile, the flesh-eaters are untamable.

TRE.: In the tropics we can live on fruits, not in the north. The Brahmins live on grains and fruit and are docile, the flesh-eaters make serfs of them. Mrs. Shelley says I am as eccentric as you; I wish I were as reasonable.

SHELLEY: Mary is under the dominion of the mythical monster "Everybody." I tell her I am of the Nobodies. You have been everywhere; have you seen the ubiquitous demon Everybody?

TRE.: Yes, in Egypt; a harmless and most useful beast. The loaded camels of a caravan are piloted by a donkey. His head-stall is decorated with bells; he leads the way and the docile animals follow, guided by the jingling. Without him they stray always. So you see the much-abused donkey is not the most stupid of animals; "Everybody" follows him.

SHELLEY: You have solved the mystery. You must tell Mary. Wise men in all ages have declared everything that is, is wrong; those who stray away find something that is right. A donkey decorated is a guide for those that are as stupid as camels; we stray, we are eccentric.

Soon after we passed some masons building a chapel, and women acting as bricklayers' labourers, carrying heavy stones and mortar.

SHELLEY: See the barbarism that the priests have reduced Italy to.

TRE.: It is the primitive state of things. In the earliest records of the human race the duty of men was as hunters and warriors, and women did all the drudgery—fetched the wood and water. The professor of anatomy at the university of Pisa—and he is a high authority—says that women, though not the strongest, are the toughest. He says the female of all races of animals are less highly organized than the male; they are not so subject to diseases, and wounds more readily heal with them than with the male. It is the poets, artists, and others of imagination who have reversed the natural order of things, and who have placed women where we should be.

SHELLEY: We are indebted to the poets for having transformed women from what they were to what they are—a solace and delight.

TRE.: No; they have overshot their mark. They tell us that our principal object, aim, and end is to seek in the world for a fair skin, silky hair, and

bright eyes; the emptier the mind the better; and that this is all life has to bestow. It is the old story—the sirens luring one to the sea-beach paved with human bones. Nature has lavished all its beauties on the male in the animal races as well as the human. Look at the hen pheasant and the pea-hen, and the singing birds, it is only the male that sings. Now we search the four corners of the earth to transform a dowdy into a fine lady. Half the world pass their lives in searching for gems and silks and satins to ornament them, and what torments does one suffer when captured by one of these dragon-flies! Men have nothing to cover themselves with but the cast-off winter clothing of sheep.

The poet, when he was in a placid humour, delighted in amplifying notions the most adverse to his real opinions.

I said,

"The primitive people in the Indian Archipelago and other countries alone preserve the natural order of things. I once put into a bay on the eastern coast of Madagascar for fresh provisions and water. A great chief came down to barter with a retinue of nude followers, he himself being

distinguished by having a gold-laced cocked hat with feathers, such as worn by generals of division, and hunting boots, otherwise as naked as Adam; his face and body elaborately ornamented by tattooing with colours which I had never seen before."

SHELLEY: In youth I thought the reasoning faculties, if fairly developed, would triumph, but passions overpower all our faculties. The animals are guided by their instincts, we by our cultivated cunning and blind passions.

TRE.: And reason.

SHELLEY: No, that faculty is paralysed by the priests. . . . .

Of such stuff was our ordinary talk, to keep him awake from his dreamy reveries, and so we reached Leghorn.

During our return I said to him,

"You had better dine with me."

He replied,

"What for?" (I saw he was disturbed.) "When?"

I said,

"Now," and produced a basket of all the fresh fruits of the season, saying,

"The Muses might dine on this food."

He answered,

"No; they live in the blue regions of the air."

Notwithstanding his protest, he went on picking the grapes and eating the fruit, unconscious of what he was doing. He invariably read when he was eating. He now had in his hand a monthly review, sent to him from England. He never in such cases laughed, but I saw by his eyes that he was amused. I said,

"What is it that amuses you?"

SHELLEY: The "Epipsychidion," that you like so much, the reviewer denounces as the rhapsody of a madman. That it may be a rhapsody I won't deny, and a man cannot decide on his own sanity. Your dry, matter-of-fact men denounce all flights of imagination as proofs of insanity, and so did the Greek sect of the Stoics. All the mass of mankind consider everyone eccentric or insane who utters sentiments they do not comprehend.

There was other abuse of him in the magazine. I said,

"The Persian poet Hafiz would have consoled you by saying, 'You are like the shell of ocean that fills with pearls the hand that wounds you.'"

He was delighted with the Eastern metaphors, and I repeated many others to him, talking of Eastern civilization, from which all poetry had originated.

In answer to my questions Shelley once said,

"In writing the 'Cenci' my object was to see how I could succeed in describing passions I have never felt, and to tell the most dreadful story in pure and refined language. The image of Beatrice haunted me after seeing her portrait. The story is well authenticated, and the details far more horrible than I have painted them. The 'Cenci' is a work of art; it is not coloured by my feelings, nor obscured by my metaphysics. I don't think much of it. It gave me less trouble than anything I have written of the same length.

"I am now writing a play for the stage. It is affectation to say we write a play for any other purpose. The subject is from English history;[1] in style and manner I shall approach as near our great dramatist as my feeble powers will permit. 'King Lear' is my model, for that is nearly perfect. I am amazed at my presumption. Poets should be modest. My audacity savours of madness.

[1] Charles the First.

"Considering the labour requisite to excel in composition, I think it would be better to stick to one style. The clamour for novelty is leading us all astray. Yet, at Venice, I urged Byron to come out of the dismal 'wood of error' into the sun, to write something new and cheerful. 'Don Juan' is the result. The poetry is superior to 'Childe Harold,' and the plan, or rather want of plan, gives scope to his astonishing natural powers.

"My friends say my 'Prometheus' is too wild, ideal, and perplexed with imagery. It may be so. It has no resemblance to the Greek drama. It is original; and cost me severe mental labour. Authors, like mothers, prefer the children who have given them most trouble. Milton preferred his 'Paradise Regained,' Petrarch his 'Africa,' and Byron his 'Doge of Venice.'

"I have the vanity to write only for poetical minds, and must be satisfied with few readers. Byron is ambitious; he writes for all, and all read his works."

I said,

"The son of a man of genius has sent me a very silly poem to show Byron. Why are not germs of

genius transmitted in a race? their physical diseases are, but none of their mental qualities."

Shelley answered,

"It would be a more intolerable wrong of nature than any which man has devised; the sons of foolish parents would have no hope."

TRE.: Then the sins of parents, their diseases, should not be transmitted.

SHELLEY: With regard to the great question, the System of the Universe, I have no curiosity on the subject. I am content to see no farther into futurity than Plato and Bacon. My mind is tranquil; I have no fears and some hopes. In our present gross material state our faculties are clouded;—when Death removes our clay coverings the mystery will be solved.

He thought a play founded on Shakespeare's "Timon" would be an excellent mode of discussing our present social and political evils dramatically, and of descanting on them.

At Leghorn, after we had done our business, I called on my Scotch friends and lured my companion in. He abhorred forcing himself on strangers—so I did not mention his name, merely observing,

"As you said you wanted information about Italy, here is a friend of mine can give it you—for I cannot."

The ladies—for there was no man there—were capital specimens of Scotchwomen, fresh from the land of cakes,—frank, fair, intelligent, and of course, pious. After a long and earnest talk we left them, but not without difficulty, so pressing were they for us to stop to dinner.

After returning with Shelley from Leghorn, I put up my chaise at the hostelry, and went in to dine with Mrs. Shelley. All fixed rules of feeding the Poet looked upon as ridiculous; he grazed when he was hungry, anywhere, at any time. Mrs. Shelley conformed to the ways of the world in all things that she could.

Finding no one about the house, I went into his library; the Poet was untying the bag of scudi that we brought from Leghorn. Standing up he turned out the bag on to the hearth-rug, and the glittering coins bespangled the floor. It was amusing to see him scraping them together with the shovel out of the fireplace; having adroitly got them into a lump he pressed them as flat as he could with his foot, then skilfully with the shovel divided them as nearly as

possible into two equal portions; one of the halves he divided again into two equal portions by guesswork, saying to Mary,

"That half will feed the house and pay the rent," then pointing to the smaller portion he said, "that will do for you. This is my portion."

Then he spoke lower to her that I might not hear, but she told me that he said,

"I will give this to poor Tom Medwin, who wants to go to Naples and has no money."

I said to Mary as we were dining,

"Why, he has left nothing for himself."

She said,

"No, if he wants anything he tells me to get it, and if he wants a scudo to give anyone, perhaps I lend it him (smiling), but he can't be trusted with money, and he won't have it."

When I next visited the Scotch ladies, they were disappointed at the absence of my companion; and when I told them it was Shelley, the young and handsome mother clasped her hands, and exclaimed,

"Shelley! That bright-eyed youth; so gentle, so intelligent—so thoughtful for us. Oh, why did you not name him?"

"Because he thought you would have been shocked."

"Shocked!—why I would have knelt to him in penitence for having wronged him even in my thoughts. If he is not pure and good—then there is no truth and goodness in this world. His looks reminded me of my own blessed baby,—so innocent —so full of love and sweetness."

"So is the serpent that tempted Eve described," I said.

"Oh, you wicked scoffer!" she continued. "But I know you love him. I shall have no peace of mind until you bring him here. You remember, sister, I said his young face had lines of care and sorrow on it—when he was showing us the road to Rome on the map and the sun shone on it;—poor boy! Oh, tell us about his wife,—is she worthy of him? She must love him dearly—and so must all who know him."

To palliate the warm-hearted lady's admiration of the Poet—as well as my own—I must observe, that all on knowing him sang the same song; and as I have before observed, even Byron in his most moody and cynical vein, joined in the chorus, echoing my

monotonous notes. The reason was, that after having heard or read the rancorous abuse heaped on Shelley by the mercenary literature of the day, —in which he was described as a monster more hideous than Caliban,—the revulsion of feeling on seeing the man was so great, that he seemed as gentle a spirit as Ariel. There never has been nor can be any true likeness of him. Desdemona says, "I saw Othello's visage in his mind," and Shelley's "visage" as well as his mind are to be seen in his works.

When I was at Leghorn with Shelley, I drew him towards the docks, saying,

"As we have a spare hour let's see if we can't put a girdle round about the earth in forty minutes. In these docks are living specimens of all the nationalities of the world; thus we can go round it, and visit and examine any particular nation we like, observing their peculiar habits, manners, dress, language, food, productions, arts, and naval architecture; for see how varied are the shapes, build, rigging, and decoration of the different vessels. There lies an English cutter, a French chasse-marée, an American clipper, a Spanish tartan, an Austrian

trabarcolo, a Genoese felucca, a Sardinian zebec, a Neapolitan brig, a Sicilian sparanza, a Dutch galleot, a Danish snow, a Russian hermaphrodite, a Turkish sackalever, a Greek bombard. I don't see a Persian dhow, an Arab grab, or a Chinese junk; but there are enough for our purpose and to spare. As you have lately written a poem, 'Hellas,' about the modern Greeks, would it not be as well to take a look at them amidst all the din of the docks? I hear their shrill nasal voices, and should like to know if you can trace in the language or lineaments of these Greeks of the nineteenth century A.D., the faintest resemblance to the lofty and sublime spirits who lived in the fifth century B.C. An English merchant who has dealings with them told me he thought these modern Greeks were, if judged by their actions, a cross between the Jews and gypsies; —but here comes the Capitano Zarita; I know him."

So dragging Shelley with me I introduced him, and asking to see the vessel, we crossed the plank from the quay and stood on the deck of the "San Spiridione" in the midst of her chattering irascible crew. They took little heed of the skipper, for in these trading vessels each individual of the crew is

part owner, and has some share in the cargo; so they are all interested in the speculation—having no wages. They squatted about the decks in small knots, shrieking, gesticulating, smoking, eating, and gambling like savages.

"Does this realize your idea of Hellenism, Shelley?" I said.

"No! but it does of Hell," he replied.

The captain insisted on giving us pipes and coffee in his cabin, so I dragged Shelley down. Over the rudder-head facing us, there was a gilt box enshrining a flaming gaudy daub of a saint, with a lamp burning before it; this was Il Padre Santo Spiridione, the ship's godfather. The skipper crossed himself and squatted on the dirty divan. Shelley talked to him about the Greek revolution that was taking place, but from its interrupting trade the captain was opposed to it.

"Come away!" said Shelley. "There is not a drop of the old Hellenic blood here. These are not the men to rekindle the ancient Greek fire; their souls are extinguished by traffic and superstition. Come away!"—and away we went.

"It is but a step," I said, "from these ruins of

worn-out Greece to the New World; let's board the American clipper."

"I had rather not have any more of my hopes and illusions mocked by sad realities," said Shelley.

"You must allow," I answered, "that graceful craft was designed by a man who had a poet's feeling for things beautiful; let's get a model and build a boat like her."

The idea so pleased the Poet that he followed me on board her. The Americans are a social, free-and-easy people, accustomed to take their own way, and to readily yield the same privilege to all others, so that our coming on board, and examination of the vessel, fore and aft, were not considered as intrusion. The captain was on shore, so I talked to the mate, a smart specimen of a Yankee. When I commended her beauty, he said,

"I do expect, now we have our new copper on, she has a look of the brass sarpent, she has as slick a run, and her bearings are just where they should be. We hoist up to heaven, and shoot home to hell, and cover the ocean with our canvas."

I said we wished to build a boat after her model.

"Then I calculate you must go to Baltimore or

Boston to get one; there is no one on this side the water can do the job. We have our freight all ready, and are homeward-bound; we have elegant accommodation, and you will be across before your young friend's beard is ripe for a razor. Come down, and take an observation of the state cabin."

It was about ten and a-half feet by five or six; "plenty of room to live or die comfortably in," he observed; and then pressed us to have a chaw of real old Virginian cake, *i.e.* tobacco, and a cool drink of peach brandy. I made some observation to him about the Greek vessel we had visited.

"Crank as an eggshell," he said; "too many sticks and top hamper, she looks like a bundle of chips going to hell to be burnt."

I seduced Shelley into drinking a wine-glass of weak grog, the first and last he ever drank. The Yankee would not let us go until we had drunk, under the star-spangled banner, to the memory of Washington, and the prosperity of the American commonwealth.

"As a warrior and statesman," said Shelley, "he was righteous in all he did, unlike all who lived

before or since; he never used his power but for the benefit of his fellow-creatures:—

"'He fought,
For truth and wisdom, foremost of the brave;
Him glory's idle glances dazzled not;
'Twas his ambition, generous and great,
A life to life's great end to consecrate.'"

"Stranger," said the Yankee, "truer words were never spoken; there is dry rot in all the main timbers of the Old World, and none of you will do any good till you are docked, refitted, and annexed to the New. You must log that song you sang; there ain't many Britishers that will say as much of the man that whipped them; so just set these lines down in the log, or it won't go for nothing."

Shelley wrote some verses in the book, but not those he had quoted; and so we parted.

It was now time to return to Pisa. I never lost an opportunity of thus giving the dreamy bard glimpses of rough life. He disliked it, but could not resist my importunity. He had seen no more of the working-day world than a girl at a boarding-school, and his habit of eternally brooding on his own thoughts, in solitude and silence, damaged his health of mind and body. Like many other over-sensitive

people, he thought everybody shunned him, whereas it was he who stood aloof. To the few who sought his acquaintance he was frank, cordial, and, if they appeared worthy, friendly in the extreme; but he shrank like a maiden from making the first advances. At the beginning of his literary life, he believed all authors published their opinions as he did his from a deep conviction of their truth and importance, after due investigation. When new works appeared, on any subject that interested him, he would write to the authors expressing his opinion of their books, and giving his reasons for his judgment, always arguing logically, and not for display; and, with his sérene and imperturbable temper, variety of knowledge, tenacious memory, command of language, or rather of all the languages of literature, he was a most subtle critic; but, as authors are not the meekest or mildest of men, he occasionally met with rude rebuffs, and retired into his own shell.

In this way he became acquainted with Godwin, in early life; and in his first work, "Queen Mab," or rather in the notes appended to that poem, the old philosopher's influence on the beardless boy

is strongly marked. For printing these notes Shelley was punished as Ishmael is stated to have been—"every man's hand was against him." Southey, Wordsworth, Keats, and others he had either written to, corresponded with, or personally known; but in their literary guild he found little sympathy; their enthusiasm had burnt out whilst Shelley's had waxed stronger. Old Rothschild's sage maxim perhaps influenced them, "Never connect yourself with an unlucky man." However that may be, all intercourse had long ceased between Shelley and any of the literary fraternity of the day, with the exception of Peacock, Keats, Leigh Hunt, and the Brothers Smith, of the "Rejected Addresses."

I will now return to our drive home from visiting the ships in the docks of Leghorn. Shelley was in high glee, and full of fun, as he generally was after these "distractions," as he called them. The fact was his excessive mental labour impeded, if it did not paralyse, his bodily functions. When his mind was fixed on a subject, his mental powers were strained to the utmost. If not writing or sleeping, he was reading; he read whilst eating, walking, or travelling—the last thing at night, and the first

thing in the morning—not the ephemeral literature of the day, which requires little or no thought, but the works of the old sages, metaphysicians, logicians, and philosophers, of the Grecian and Roman poets, and of modern scientific men, so that anything that could divert or relax his overstrained brain was of the utmost benefit to him. Now he talked of nothing but ships, sailors, and the sea; and, although he agreed with Johnson that a man who made a pun would pick a pocket, yet he made several in Greek, which he at least thought good, for he shrieked with laughter as he uttered them. Fearing his phil-Hellenism would end by making him serious, as it always did, I brought his mind back by repeating some lines of Sedley's, beginning

> "Love still has something of the sea
> From whence his mother rose."

During the rest of our drive we had nothing but sea yarns. He regretted having wasted his life in Greek and Latin, instead of learning the useful arts of swimming and sailoring. He resolved to have a good-sized boat forthwith. I proposed we should form a colony at the Gulf of Spezzia, and I said—"You get Byron to join us, and with your family

and the Williamses, and books, horses, and boats, undisturbed by the botherations of the world, we shall have all that reasonable people require."

This scheme enchanted him. "Well," I said, "propose this to Byron to-morrow."

"No!" he answered, "you must do that. Byron is always influenced by his last acquaintance. You are the last man, so do you pop the question."

"I understand that feeling," I observed. "When well known neither men nor women realize our first conception of them; so we transfer our hopes to the new men or women who make a sign of sympathy, only to find them like those who have gone before, or worse." I quoted his own lines as exemplifying my meaning—

> "Where is the beauty, love, and truth we seek,
> But in our minds!"

Byron was obstinate, but only when rubbed against the grain, or roughly handled; his body was inert, he was careless and recklessly pliant; a fresh mind, possessing the qualities he lacked, could do anything with him, for he had not made up his mind on any subject; whereas Shelley never wavered, he was unalterable. Both the poets' early deaths

were hastened, if not caused, by the stubbornness of the one and the inertness of the other.

One day as the sun was setting, and I was crossing from the south to the north side of the bridge at Pisa, I ran against Williams; and, a few minutes after, caught sight of Shelley's bright eyes in the distance (I always recognized Shelley by his eyes), and said to them,

"The river has risen, and has swept the waifs and strays off its banks; they are caught by the eddies and sucked into shallows in the bends of the river. So have we three been caught here.

"On the south side of the bridge I met an old Florentine acquaintance of mine, who is a bit of an archæologist, and I have learnt much from him. I asked him which was the healthiest place to live in —Pisa or Florence—and which was the oldest bridge across the Arno.

"He answered,

"'I return to Florence to-morrow. On Sunday evening, at half-past four, I have an antique supper at my house. There will be eight pre-Adamites—two of them are centenarians, three are ninety-five years old, and two are nonagenarians. They are live his-

tory; and if you will do us the honour to come, they will answer all your questions and many others. My party will prove the healthiness of Florence. At Pisa I do not know anyone at ninety.' If Samuel Rogers arrives, as he promised on Saturday, Byron will be for sending him as a specimen of an English centenarian. My friend keeps a record of all the oldest inhabitants in Florence; he says there are sixteen above ninety whom he knows."

Shelley said,

"He does not know me; he can put me down among the nonagenarians."

"My host's house at Florence is very ancient, and near the Ponte Vecchio; everything in the room they sup in will be above a hundred years old, and everything on the table will be a hundred years old, except the eatables. Some of his guests are well educated, and have held high places—one as a judge. They can give you the history of everything in Florence for the last hundred and fifty years. I have not made up my mind whether I shall go. As we three castaways have met from three cross-roads, we should sit down here, open our wallets, and, when we are refreshed, tell our stories in the

fashion of the old wayfarers and pilgrims. We are three birds of the same feather, same age (twenty-nine), were cast out at about the same time, and denounced as Pariahs. We are more than one thousand miles from the island we were hatched in; our affectionate parents hove us out of our nests as the birds heave their young out of theirs, on this dangerous earth. How we escaped from the ground-vermin, reptiles, and traps, and gained strength to take this long flight, we must now tell. You, Williams, will find bread in Shelley's wallet; I will dull my senses with a cigar. Neither of you has ever used the noxious weed; to me it's a solace. As Shelley says he is three times as old as either of us, he must first recount his adventures."

SHELLEY: Mine is a life of failures. Peacock says my poetry is composed of day-dreams and night-mares; and Leigh Hunt does not think it good enough for the "Examiner." Jefferson Hogg says all poetry is inverted sense, and consequently nonsense. Every man should attempt to do something. Poetry was the rage of the day, and I racked my imagination to be a poet. I wrote, and the critics denounced me as a mischievous visionary, and my

friends said that I had mistaken my vocation, that my poetry was mere rhapsody of words; that I was soaring in the blue regions of the air, disconnected from all human sympathy. I should have liked to be a sailor; Tre says I cannot.

WILLIAMS: Why?

TRE.: Because he cannot smoke, or drink, or swear, and those are essential qualifications for a sailor.

WILLIAMS: I was in the Navy at eleven years old. I liked the sea, but detested the tyranny practised on board men-of-war. I left the Navy, went into the Dragoons, and was sent to India. My mother was a widow; a man married her for her money. Her money he would have, and he defrauded me of a large portion of my inheritance. I sold my commission, marred my prospects of rising by marrying, and drifted here. Now it is your turn, Tre: you have been as far as God has any ground.

TRE. Well, as the sage Dogberry expresses it, "God is a good man." If I commence my tough yarns, the city patrol will be upon us; and, remember, you two have built your nests after the

fashion of the Australian bower birds, and there will be a dire commotion at your absence; my entrance will be ever after barred; and my cigar is out, and I have no other. So we must separate.

And so we did.

CHAPTER X.

First our pleasures die—and then
Our hopes, and then our fears—and when
These are dead, the debt is due,
Dust claims dust—and we die too.

SHELLEY.

THE following morning I told Byron our plan of going to the Gulf of Spezzia. Without any suggestion from me he eagerly volunteered to join us, and asked me to get a yacht built for him, and to look out for a house as near the sea as possible. I allowed some days to pass before I took any steps, in order to see if his wayward mind would change. As he grew more urgent I wrote to an old naval friend, Captain Roberts, then staying at Genoa, a man peculiarly fitted to execute the order, and requested him to send plans and estimates of an open boat for Shelley, and a large decked one for Byron. Shortly after, Williams and I rode along the coast to the Gulf of Spezzia. Shelley had no

pride or vanity to provide for, yet we had the greatest difficulty in finding any house in which the humblest civilized family could exist.

On the shores of this superb bay, only surpassed in its natural beauty and capability by that of Naples, so effectually had tyranny paralysed the energies and enterprise of man, that the only indication of human habitation was a few most miserable fishing villages scattered along the margin of the bay. Near its centre, between the villages of San Terenzo and Lerici, we came upon a lonely and abandoned building called the Villa Magni, though it looked more like a boat or bathing-house than a place to live in. It consisted of a terrace or ground-floor unpaved, and used for storing boat-gear and fishing-tackle, and of a single storey over it divided into a hall or saloon and four small rooms which had once been whitewashed; there was one chimney for cooking. This place we thought the Shelleys might put up with for the summer. The only good thing about it was a verandah facing the sea, and almost over it. So we sought the owner and made arrangements, dependent on Shelley's approval, for taking it for six months. As to finding a palazzo grand

enough for a Milordo Inglese, within a reasonable distance of the bay, it was out of the question.

Williams returned to Pisa; I rode on to Genoa, and settled with Captain Roberts about building the boats. He had already, with his usual activity, obtained permission to build them in the government dockyards, and had his plans and estimates made out. I need hardly say that though the Captain was a great arithmetician, this estimate, like all the estimates as to time and cost that were ever made, was a mere delusion, which made Byron wroth, but did not ruffle Shelley's serenity.

On returning to Pisa I found the two Poets going through the same routine of habits they had adopted before my departure; the one getting out of bed after noon, dawdling about until two or three, following the same road on horseback, stopping at the same Podere, firing his pop-guns, and retracing his steps at the same slow pace;—his frugal dinner followed by his accustomed visit to an Italian family, and then—the midnight lamp, and the immortal verses.

The other was up at six or seven, reading Plato, Sophocles, or Spinoza, with the accompaniment of

a hunch of dry bread; then he joined Williams in a sail on the Arno, in a flat-bottomed skiff, book in hand, and from thence he went to the pine-forest, or some out-of-the-way place. When the birds went to roost he returned home, and talked and read until midnight. The monotony of this life was only broken at long intervals by the arrival of some old acquaintances of Byron's: Rogers, Hobhouse, Moore, Scott—not Sir Walter,—and these visits were brief. John Murray, the publisher, sent out new books, and wrote amusing gossiping letters, as did Tom Moore and others. These we were generally allowed to read, or hear read, Byron archly observing, "My private and confidential letters are better known than any of my published works."

Shelley's boyish eagerness to possess the new toy, from which he anticipated never-failing pleasure in gliding over the azure seas, under the cloudless skies of an Italian summer, was pleasant to behold. His comrade Williams was inspired by the same spirit. We used to draw plans on the sands of the Arno of the exact dimensions of the boat, dividing her into compartments (the forepart was decked for stowage), and then, squatting down within the

lines, I marked off the imaginary cabin. With a real chart of the Mediterranean spread out before them, and with faces as grave and anxious as those of Columbus and his companions, they held councils as to the islands to be visited, coasts explored, courses steered, the amount of armament, stores, water and provisions which would be necessary. Then we would narrate instances of the daring of the old navigators, as when Diaz discovered the Cape of Good Hope in 1446, with two vessels each of fifty tons burthen; or when Drake went round the world, one of his craft being only thirty tons; and of the extraordinary runs and enterprises accomplished in open boats of equal or less tonnage than the one we were building, from the earliest times to those of Commodore Bligh. Byron with the smile of a Mephistopheles standing by, asked me the amount of salvage we, the salvors, should be entitled to in the probable event of our picking up and towing Shelley's water-logged craft into port.

As the world spun round, the sandy plains of Pisa became too hot to be agreeable, and the Shelleys, longing for the sea breezes, departed to their new abode. Byron could not muster energy

enough to break through his dawdling habits, so he lingered on under the fair plea of seeing the Leigh Hunts settled in his ground floor, which was prepared for them. I rode on to Genoa to hasten the completion and despatch of the long-promised boat-flotilla. I found Captain Roberts had nearly finished Shelley's boat. Williams had brought with him, on leaving England, the section of a boat as a model to build from, designed by a naval officer, and the two friends had so often sat contemplating this toy, believing it to be a marvel of nautical architecture, that nothing would satisfy them but that their craft should be built exactly on the same lines. Roberts, and the builder at Genoa, not approving, protested against it. You might as well have attempted to persuade a young man after a season of boating, or hunting, that he was not a thorough seaman and sportsman; or a youngster flushed with honours from a university that he was not the wisest of men. Williams was on ordinary occasions as humble-minded as Shelley, but having been two or three years in the Navy, and then in the cavalry, he thought there was no vanity in his believing that he was as good a judge of a boat or

horse as any man. In these small conceits we are all fools at the beginning of life, until time, with his sledge-hammer, has let the daylight into our brain-boxes; so the boat was built according to his cherished model. When it was finished, it took two tons of iron ballast to bring her down to her bearings, and then she was very crank in a breeze, though not deficient in beam. She was fast, strongly built, and Torbay rigged. I despatched her under charge of two steady seamen, and a smart sailor lad, aged eighteen, named Charles Vivian. Shelley sent back the two sailors and only retained the boy; they told me on their return to Genoa that they had been out in a rough night, that she was a ticklish boat to manage, but had sailed and worked well, and with two good seamen she would do very well; and that they had cautioned the gents accordingly. I shortly after received the following letter from Shelley:—

Lerici, May 16, 1822.

My dear Trelawny,

The "Don Juan" is arrived, and nothing can exceed the admiration she has excited; for we must suppose the name to have been given her during

VILLA MAGNI, SHELLEY'S RESIDENCE IN THE GULF OF SPEZIA, A.D. 1822, WITH THE BOAT (THE "DON JUAN") IN WHICH HE WAS WRECKED.

the equivocation of sex which her godfather suffered in the harem. Williams declares her to be perfect, and I participate in his enthusiasm, inasmuch as would be decent in a landsman. We have been out now several days, although we have sought in vain for an opportunity of trying her against the feluccas or other large craft in the bay; she passes the small ones as a comet might pass the dullest planet of the heavens. When do you expect to be here in the "Bolivar?" If Roberts's 50*l.* grow into a 500*l.*, and his ten days into months, I suppose I may expect that I am considerably in your debt, and that you will not be round here until the middle of the summer. I hope that I shall be mistaken in the last of these conclusions; as to the former, whatever may be the result, I have little reason and less inclination to complain of my bargain. I wish you could express from me to Roberts how excessively I am obliged to him for the time and trouble he has expended for my advantage, and which I wish could be as easily repaid as the money which I owe him, and which I wait your orders for remitting.

I have only heard from Lord Byron once, and

solely upon that subject. Tita[1] is with me, and I suppose will go with you in the schooner to Leghorn. We are very impatient to see you, and although we cannot hope that you will stay long on your *first* visit, we count upon you for the latter part of the summer, as soon as the novelty of Leghorn is blunted. Mary desires her best regards to you, and unites with me in a sincere wish to renew an intimacy from which we have already experienced so much pleasure.

Believe me, my dear Trelawny,

Your very sincere friend,

P. B. SHELLEY.

Lerici, June 18, 1822.

MY DEAR TRELAWNY,

I have written to Guebhard, to pay you 154 Tuscan crowns, the amount of the balance against me according to Roberts's calculation, which I keep for your satisfaction, deducting sixty, which I paid the aubergiste at Pisa, in all 214. We saw you about eight miles in the offing this morning; but the abatement of the breeze leaves us little hope that you can have made Leghorn this evening. Pray

[1] A servant of Byron's.

write us a full, true, and particular account of your proceedings, &c.—How Lord Byron likes the vessel; what are your arrangements and intentions for the summer; and when we may expect to see you or him in this region again; and especially whether there is any news of Hunt.

Roberts and Williams are very busy in refitting the "Don Juan;" they seem determined that she shall enter Leghorn in style. I am no great judge of these matters; but am excessively obliged to the former, and delighted that the latter should find amusement, like the sparrow, in educating the cuckoo's young.

You, of course, enter into society at Leghorn: should you meet with any scientific person capable of preparing the *Prussic Acid, or essential oil of bitter almonds*, I should regard it as a great kindness if you could procure me a small quantity. It requires the greatest caution in preparation, and ought to be highly concentrated; I would give any price for this medicine; you remember we talked of it the other night, and we both expressed a wish to possess it; my wish was serious, and sprung from the desire of avoiding needless suffering. I need not tell you I

have no intention of suicide at present, but I confess it would be a comfort to me to hold in my possession that golden key to the chamber of perpetual rest. *The Prussic Acid* is used in medicine in infinitely minute doses; but that preparation is weak, and has not the concentration necessary to medicine all ills infallibly. A single drop, even less, is a dose, and it acts by paralysis.

I am curious to hear of this publication about Lord Byron and the Pisa circle. I hope it will not annoy him; as to me I am supremely indifferent. If you have not shown the letter I sent you, don't, until Hunt's arrival, when we shall certainly meet.

Your very sincere friend,

P. B. SHELLEY.

Mary is better, though still excessively weak.

Not long after, I followed in Byron's boat, the "Bolivar" schooner. There was no fault to find with her, Roberts and the builder had fashioned her after their own fancy, and she was both fast and safe. I manned her with five able seamen, four Genoese and one Englishman. I put into the Gulf

of Spezzia, and found Shelley in ecstasy with his boat, and Williams as touchy about her reputation as if she had been his wife. They were hardly ever out of her, and talked of the Mediterranean as a lake too confined and tranquil to exhibit her sea-going excellence. They longed to be on the broad Atlantic, scudding under bare poles in a heavy sou'wester, with plenty of sea room. I went out for a sail in Shelley's boat to see how they would manage her. It was great fun to witness Williams teaching the Poet how to steer, and other points of seamanship. As usual, Shelley had a book in hand, saying he could read and steer at the same time, as one was mental, the other mechanical.

"Luff!" said Williams.

Shelley put the helm the wrong way. Williams corrected him.

"Do you see those two white objects a-head? keep them in a line, the wind is heading us." Then, turning to me, he said: "Lend me a hand to haul in the main-sheet, and I will show you how close she can lay to the wind to work off a lee-shore."

"No," I answered; "I am a passenger, and won't touch a rope."

"Luff!" said Williams, as the boat was yawing about. "Shelley, you can't steer, you have got her in the wind's eye; give me the tiller, and you attend the main-sheet. Ready about!" said Williams. "Helms down—let go the fore-sheet—see how she spins round on her heel—is not she a beauty? Now, Shelley, let go the main-sheet, and boy, haul aft the jib-sheet!"

The main-sheet was jammed, and the boat unmanageable, or as sailors express it, in irons; when the two had cleared it, Shelley's hat was knocked overboard, and he would probably have followed, if I had not held him. He was so uncommonly awkward that, when they had things ship-shape, Williams, somewhat scandalized at the lubberly manœuvre, blew up the Poet for his neglect and inattention to orders. Shelley was, however, so happy and in such high glee, and the nautical terms so tickled his fancy, that he even put his beloved "Plato" in his pocket, and gave his mind up to fun and frolic.

"You will do no good with Shelley," I said, "until you heave his books and papers overboard; shear the wisps of hair that hang over his eyes; and plunge his arms up to the elbows in a tar-bucket.

And you, captain, will have no authority, until you dowse your frock coat and cavalry boots. You see I am stripped for a swim, so please, whilst I am on board, to keep within swimming distance of the land."

The boy was quick and handy, and used to boats. Williams was not as deficient as I anticipated, but over-anxious and wanted practice, which alone makes a man prompt in emergency. Shelley was intent on catching images from the ever-changing sea and sky, he heeded not the boat. On my suggesting the addition to their crew of a Genoese sailor accustomed to the coast—such as I had on board the "Bolivar"—Williams, thinking I undervalued his efficiency as a seaman, was scandalized: "As if we three seasoned salts were not enough to manage an open boat, when lubberly sloops and cutters of fifty or sixty tons were worked by as few men on the rough seas and iron-bound coast of Scotland!"

"Yes," I answered, "but what a difference between those sea-lions and you and our water-poet! A decked cutter besides, or even a frigate, is easier handled in a gale or squall, and out-and-out safer to

be on board of than an open boat. If we had been in a squall to-day with the main-sheet jammed, and the tiller put starboard instead of port, we should have had to swim for it."

"Not I: I should have gone down with the rest of the pigs in the bottom of the boat," said Shelley, meaning the iron pig-ballast.

The Poet's boat was not more than thirty feet long, with a beam in proportion; but she drew too much water to come near the shore, and so Captain Williams, with the aid of a carpenter, built a tiny dingey, six or seven feet long, flat-bottomed, and very light, constructed of basket-work, covered with canvas and tarred, exactly as the Welsh make their coracles on their rivers, to carry one person, and, on land, one person could carry it from the beach into the house. The Poet was delighted with this fragile toy, and toying with it on the water, it often capsized, and gave him many a header: standing up, or an incautious movement, upset it. These tricks he attributed to the viciousness of the dingey, and not to his excessive awkwardness. "I see now," he said, "the reason ships and boats are feminine; because like women they are perverse." He was as

proud of it as a bold boy with a skittish pony. By practice he learnt to mitigate its evils, and vaunted that he had mastered and could do anything with it, and recklessly went out in bad weather. Poets, not having much on land, claim the unenclosed ocean, or, at least, the Poet Laureateship, as their especial privilege:—

> "The sea, the sea, the dark blue sea,
> The bright, the pure, the ever free."

They write in ecstasy, as they do to a mistress, and ever they love it best of all, and in all its moods it is their ideal love; but their loves and hates spring from the head, not heart. In or on it there is no beast or bird so deplorably helpless; they are qualmish at the sight of it, and sick when on it; they are, as sailors profanely say of ladies, "the aukerd'st things as is."

Byron by his writings would have us believe that "a tent on shore and galley on the sea" comprised all his wants, and were indispensable to him. The first time I went on board a vessel with him I made some remark regarding her: he said, "Tre, do what's best; it's no use asking me. Do you think we know

all the things we write about? I write best on things I know the least, for then I am unprejudiced."

Shelley liked paddling his skiff out to sea, and then letting it drift until the sea breeze came and lapped up its side over the gunwale, and drove him to the shore. "He felt," he said, "independent and safe from land bores."

On a sultry evening I heard my name called in hot haste from the verandah, Mary Shelley shrieking, "Percy will be drowned; the boat is upset; he is struggling in the water; he can't stand, the waves knock him down." I saw the Poet floundering; he was more anxious to save the boat than himself; was buffeting with the waves, and lay sputtering, sprawling, and floundering, imbibing the brine. I was the only water-dog of our band; neither Percy nor Captain Roberts nor the mate could swim, nor Williams well—man and his brother, the monkey, are the only animals that cannot on instinct swim; he is too clever, he must learn. I waded into the water, and convoyed the Poet and his bark to the shore. He was shrieking, not from fear, but delight, as the crisp waves curled up and over him, breaking into foam. This was the prelude to a blustering and

squally night, wind, rain, and lightning; the spray swept the verandah, and dashed against the windows: it was a lively representation of being at sea in a squall.

A few years ago this superb bay of Spezzia, with its harbour and many advantages, was scarcely used, and its shores were thinly inhabited by the poorest classes, mostly fishermen's cabins, clustered and sheltered in the nooks and corners of the land. It was the policy of the Austrians to disarm, disunite, and extinguish every hope of the Italians, and the sun too, if they could. Now that the Goths are driven out, and the fiendish priests muzzled, Italy is no longer a geographical expression, but a reality, and is once more in the hands of the Italians. The sun shines on no land on which nature and art have been so lavish, and we shall see what they will do with it.

On a calm sultry evening, Jane was sitting on the sands before the villa on the margin of the sea with her two infants and watching for her husband—he was becalmed in the offing awaiting the sea breeze. Shelley came from the house dragging the skiff: after launching her he said to Jane,

"The sand and air are hot, let us float on the cool calm sea, there is room with careful stowage for us all in my barge."

His flashing eyes and vehement eager manner determined on the instant execution of any project that took his fancy, however perilous. He overbore all opposition in those less self-willed than he was, and women are of a trusting nature and have faith in an earnest man. So Jane impulsively and promptly squatted in the bottom of the frail bark with her babies. The Poet proud of his freight triumphantly shoved off from the shore, and to exhibit his skill as a mariner rowed round a jutting promontory into deep blue water. The sea is very shallow for a considerable distance from the land in the bay, and Jane understood that Percy intended to float on the water near the shore, for the gunwale of the boat was only a hand's breadth out of the water; a puff of wind, a ripple on the water, or an incautious movement of the Poet, or herself or children, and the tub of a thing that could barely sustain the weight within it would cant over and fill and glide from under them. There was no eye watching them, no boat within a mile, the shore fast re-

ceding, the water deepening, and the Poet dreaming. As these dismal facts flashed on Jane's mind, her insane folly in trusting herself to a man of genius, but devoid of judgment, prudence, or skill, dismayed her.

After pulling out a long way, the Poet rested on his oars, unconscious of her fears and apparently of where he was, absorbed in a deep reverie, probably reviewing all he had gone through of suffering and wrong, with no present or future.

He was a brooding and silent man, feeling acutely, but never complaining—the wounds that bleed inwards are the most fatal. He took no heed of the occurrences of daily life, or men's selfish hopes or fears; his mind was so organized that it required a nice perception to know when and how to strike the chord that would excite his attention. Spellbound by terror, she kept her eyes on the awful boatman: sad and dejected, with his head leaning on his chest, his spirit seemed crushed; his hand had been for every man, and every man's hand against him. He was "the shorn lamb, but the wind was not tempered." At any other time or place Jane would have sympathized deeply with the lorn

and despairing bard. She had made several remarks, but they met with no response. She saw death in his eyes. Suddenly he raised his head, his brow cleared and his face brightened as with a bright thought, and he exclaimed joyfully,

"Now let us together solve the great mystery."

An ordinary lady-kind would have screamed or got up to implore, or pray, or reason, and thus herself have accomplished what she most dreaded—the Poet's suggestion; but Jane, with a true woman's keen instinct—a safer guide in sudden perilous emergencies than could be found in a senate of sages—knowing Shelley was unlike all other men, felt that to be silent or strike a discordant note to his feelings might make him stamp his foot, and the leaden waters would roll over and wrap round them as a winding-sheet; that her only chance was to distract his thoughts from his dismal past life to the less dreary present—to kindle hope. In answer to his kind and affectionate proposal of "solving the great mystery," suppressing her terror and assuming her usual cheerful voice, she answered promptly,

"No, thank you, not now; I should like my dinner first, and so would the children."

This gross material answer to his sublime proposition shocked the Poet, as showing his companion could not enter into the spirit of his idea.

"And look," she continued, "the sea breeze is coming in, the mist is clearing away, and Edward is coming on shore with Trelawny; they have been out since light and must be famished, they took nothing with them, and to-morrow you are to have the boat-race to see if you can beat the 'Bolivar.' I wish we were on shore; they'll be so surprised at our being out at this time, and Edward says this boat is not safe."

"Safe!" said the Poet; "I'd go to Leghorn or anywhere in her."

Death's demon, always attending the Poet on the water, now spread his wings and vanished. Jane felt his thoughts were veering round and continued,

"You haven't written the words for the Indian air."

"Yes, I have," he answered, "long ago. I must write them out again, for I can't read what I compose and write out of doors. You must play the air again and I'll try and make the thing better."

The weird boatman now paddled to where our

boat had landed. Williams, not finding his wife in the house, came down to the beach in dismay, when I pointed her out to him in the skiff: the fisherman's boat that landed us had shoved off.

The Poet, deluded by the wiles of a woman into postponing his voyage to solve the great mystery, paddled his cockle shell of a boat into shallow water.

As soon as Jane saw the sandy bottom, she snatched up her babies and clambered out so hurriedly that the punt was capsized. Edward and I picked them up; the bard was underneath the boat and rose with it partly on his back, and was not unlike a turtle, or a hermit crab that houses itself in any empty shell it can find. Edward, surprised at his wife's lubberly way of getting out of the boat, said,

"We would have hauled the boat up, if you had waited a moment."

"No, thank you. Oh, I have escaped the most dreadful fate; never will I put my foot in that horrid coffin. Solve the great mystery? Why, he is the greatest of all mysteries. Who can predict what he will do?—and he casts a spell over everything.

You can form some notion of what other people will do as they partake of our common nature—not what he will do. He is seeking after what we all avoid, death. I wish we were away, I shall always be in terror."

Leaving them to their cogitation, I went to make my toilet, the sea my washing-basin—there was no other. As usual we had a fish dinner. Jane ate nothing; the sight of the natives of the deep was enough. Condemned men can eat, but not the suddenly reprieved.

"You won't catch me in a boat with Shelley alone," said Jane.

The Poet hearing his name—for all his faculties were marvellously acute—glided into the room, with his boyish face and radiant expression. He seized some bread and grapes—his usual food. He fed his brain as well as body; he was then reading the Spanish dramas. His body was with us but his brain in Spain. His young face looked as innocent of all guile as a cherub, and so he was. Simple, frank, and confiding, any one would trust him at sight. His mild, earnest manners won all hearts, gentle and simple. There was no limit to his

generosity and self-negation to serve a friend, and he considered all the poor and oppressed as his friends. But then he avowed that he did not believe the State religion, and repeated what many have said before him and more have thought, that priests of all denominations only consider religion as the means of obtaining that which all are desirous of—power. When Lord Eldon was Chancellor, the Church of England excommunicated unbelievers more effectually than the Church of Rome.

The ground floor of the Poet's villa was appropriated, as is often done in Italy, for stowing the implements and produce of the land, as rent is paid in kind there. In the autumn you find casks of wine, jars of oil, tools, wood, occasionally carts, and, near the sea, boats and fishing-nets. Over this floor there were a large saloon and four bedrooms, and nothing more; there was an out-building for cooking, and a place for the servants to eat and sleep in. The Williamses had one room and Shelley and his wife occupied two more, facing each other.

Events not worth narrating in the lives of ordi-

nary men are interesting as regards our Poet: they illustrate the character and the working of an over-excited brain, kept in continual action by a fervid imagination and metaphysical studies.

On a moonless and gloomy night, the wind and sea and rain making such a hubbub without that Mrs. Williams was kept awake, ruminating and longing for daylight, she was startled by a heavy weight from the saloon falling against her door and moaning. It awoke her husband, and they sprang out of their nest. On opening the door Mrs. Shelley, in her night-dress, tumbled into their room, helpless and tongue-tied by terror. The Poet, unconscious of everything, his eyes wide open, with no speculation in them, stood over her, upright and motionless, holding a lighted candle at arm's length. On Mrs. Shelley's recovering her senses she told Mrs. Williams she had been awakened by the glare of a light. On opening her eyes she beheld Shelley holding a lighted candle over her. She spoke but he did not answer. His eyes were wide open, but misty; he resembled a statue. She got out of bed and crossed the saloon; he followed, and she fainted, falling against the Williams' door.

Williams watched the sleep-walker; he stalked to the door leading out to the verandah, seemingly listening to the crashing of the waves, then walked into his room, put the candle on the table, and stretched himself on his bed.

The Poet often got up at night to write or read, and talked in sleep, but he was not a somnambulist.

> "Our simple life wants little, and true taste
> Hires not the pale drudge Luxury to waste
> The scene it would adorn."

A visitor from Genoa was expected. Shelley, anxious to do him honour, and conscious that their anchorite way of living would not suit ordinary mortals, caused a considerable commotion at the villa. After a council had been held on their commissariat, it was determined that Williams should go out in the offing to fish, another to forage on horseback. The women folks were to set their wits and hands to work. As on all such occasions, the Poet disappeared, but not until Mrs. Shelley had extorted from him a promise to be at home at the appointed hour to don a coat—his usual costume was a black jacket—and she added, archly, "I'll brush his hair and smarten him up."

The absurd womenkind proceeded to their business indoors and the others to theirs out. Their short notice for preparations was no detriment, as in the hot weather in southern climes things that are killed must be instantly cooked. Notwithstanding the bother and turmoil the ladies, as is their wont, seemed to enjoy it. They so rarely had an opportunity of exhibiting and comparing their drapery and dressmaking capabilities, that, corrupted by our example of negligence, they hardly knew themselves from the Contadine around. There were no milliners or maids or shops to help them; their wardrobes were scant, but they were young and good-looking, and had their wits and taste to help them. There was one serious drawback—they knew each the other's wardrobe. Men are so wrapt up in their own vanity and self-conceit as to believe that women adorn themselves exclusively to captivate them, whereas in general the desire of women is to astonish, eclipse, and excite the envy of their own sex:—

> "My sister is a goodly portly lady,
> A lady of a presence, she spreads satin
> As kings' ships do canvas, everywhere."

When they speak of the handsomest, they mean

the woman most costly-attired; men are of a grosser nature and estimate them by their flesh and faces. The visitor came, and he was most anxious to see the Poet, with whose works he was enchanted, and of whose great knowledge and simple habits he had heard so much from me and others; however, they knew how uncertain the Poet was, and never waited for him. The dinner was served with more precision than was usual, and, as sailors have it, "Compliments pass when gentlefolks meet."

The stranger told them the news of the outer world from which they were isolated, for newspapers at that period were a mere farrago of Austrian lies. From German humbug they got into literature. The visitor said the German students of English literature considered Shelley as a metaphysical and moral philosopher, a writer of transcendent imagination; that he awakened all the dormant faculties of his readers, was the Poet of the inner mind, that he surpassed our popular poets in depth of thought and refinement. One of the party remarked that genius purifies: the naked statues of the Greeks are modest, the draped ones of the moderns are not.

The talk was here interrupted by a concussion of glass and crockery, and a vehement exclamation, "Oh my gracious!" from one of the trio of ladies, drew all eyes her way. Appalled by the sight, the ladies instantly averted their gaze and held up their hands, not having fans, in mute despair. Had it been a ghoul, he would have been scoffed at, as they prey on the dead; if it had been a spectre or phantom he would have been robed, and therefore welcome, for they are shadowy and refined spirits; but the company were confronted by an apparition not tolerated in our chaste and refined age even in marble—by our poet, washed, indeed, for he was just out of the sea, not in an evening costume, nor was his hair dressed, as his wife had promised it should be; but, like Adam before the fall—

> "Such of late
> Columbus found the Americans, so girt
> With feathered cincture; naked else, and wild."

The brine from his shock of hair trickling down his innocent nose; if he were girt with a feathered cincture or anything else, it was not visible; small fragments of seaweed clung to his hair, and he was odorous of the salt brine—he scorned encumbering

himself with combs or towels. He was gliding noiselessly round the two sides of the saloon to his room, and might possibly have succeeded unnoticed, or certainly unchallenged—as the Italian maid, with accustomed tact, had walked by his side, carefully screening him from the company—but for the refined and excitable lady calling attention to such an unprecedented licence even in a poet.

The simple and innocent bard, grieved at having given pain by his alleged breach of etiquette, felt bound to explain his case, so, stopping beside the complainant, and drawing himself up (as the novelists have it) to his full height, with the air and accent of a boy wrongfully accused, said,

"How can I help it? I must go to my room to get my clothes; there is no way to get to it but through this. At this hour I have always found this place vacant. I have not altered my hour of bathing, but you have changed yours for dining. The skittish skiff has played me one of her usual tricks by upsetting all my clothes in the water; the land breeze is getting up, and they will be drifting out to sea again, if I don't make haste to recover them."

His blushing wife could not bandy words with a sea monster. Having thus refuted to his own satisfaction the implied censure on his manners, he, without noticing any one else, glided from out the puddle he had made on the floor into his dormitory. The dinner circle were thus indebted to the sensitive lady, not only for a full view of our poet in his character of a merman, but for an oration.

In a few minutes he reappeared, rushing down to secure his former attire. Speedily coming back, he held up a book, saying,

"I have recovered this priceless gem from the wreck" (Æschylus).

He then took his place, unconscious of having done anything that could offend any one.

All strangers were astonished at his boyish appearance. The guest could not believe it was the poet whose writings he had read five or six years back. He said,

"Why, he is not more than eighteen or twenty! The thing that impressed me most in what I read of his writings was his knowledge of the mind and display of our deepest feelings. Young writers write of outward and visible objects. When I was trans-

lating German poetry into English, I got more rare words out of Shelley's and Milton's works than from all the rest of the English poets."

This strong sensation scene spoilt the order, formality, and propriety of the banquet, but added to its mirth. To confine Shelley within the limits of conventional or any other arbitrary laws of society was out of the question; he retained his simple, boyish habits. In the last year of his life I lived in close alliance with him. To those he liked and that liked him he was cordial and confiding; to those he did not like the oracle was dumb.

I left Shelley at Spezzia, and sailed to Leghorn. He was writing in the woods. He told me he always wrote best in the open air, in a boat, under a tree, or on the bank of a river. There was, he said, an undivided spirit which reigns abroad, a sympathizing harmony amongst the works of nature, that made him better acquainted with himself and them.

"If," said he, "I had passed a day in a city, as I have done this one on this lovely spot, I should accuse myself of having lost rather than gained a day, by not having applied myself to any kind of improvement."

When I took my departure for Leghorn on board the "Bolivar," Shelley and Williams accompanied me out of the bay, and then we parted. I arrived at Leghorn the same night. I found my Lord Inglese had at last mustered sufficient energy to move from Pisa to Monte Nero, near Leghorn; I condoled with him on the change, for his new, flimsy-built villa—not unlike the suburban verandahed cockney boxes on the Thames—was ten times hotter than the old solid palace he had left, with its cool marble halls, and arched and lofty floors that defied the sun. He was satisfied with his boat, but by no means with its cost; he took little interest in her, and I could not induce him to take a cruise; he always had some excuse. The first time he came on board, he said in answer to something I pointed out in the rigging:—

"People think I must be a bit of a sailor from my writings. All the sea-terms I use are from authority, and they cost me time, toil, and trouble to look them out; but you will find me a landlubber. I hardly know the stem from the stern, and don't know the name or use of a single rope or sail; I know the deep sea is blue, and not

green, as that greenhorn Shakespeare always calls it."

This was literally true; in regard to Byron, he neither knew nor cared to know, nor ever asked a question (excepting when writing) about sea-terms or sea-life.

Towards the end of June, 1822, the long-expected family of the Hunts arrived by sea from England.

Byron observed, "You will find Leigh Hunt a gentleman in dress and address; at least he was so when I last saw him in England, with a taint of cockneyism."

I found him a gentleman and something more; and with a quaint fancy and cultivated mind. He was in high spirits, and disposed to be pleased with others. His anticipated literary projects in conjunction with Byron and Shelley were a source of great pleasure to him—so was the land of beauty and song. He had come to it as to a new home, in which, as the immortal Robins the auctioneer would have said: "You will find no nuisance but the litter of the rose-leaves and the noise of the nightingales." The pleasure that surpassed all the rest, was the anticipation of seeing speedily his friend Shelley.

But, alas! all those things which seemed so certain—

> "Those juggling fiends
> That keep the word of promise to our ear,
> And break it to our hope,"

so kept—and so broke—it with Leigh Hunt.

The first visit I paid to Byron after the Hunts' arrival I found Mrs. Hunt was confined to her room, as she generally was, from bad health. Hunt too was in delicate health—a hypochondriac; and the seven children, untamed, the eldest a little more than ten and the youngest a yearling, were scattered about playing on the large marble staircase and in the hall. Hunt's theory and practice were that children should be unrestrained until they were of an age to be reasoned with. If they kept out of his way he was satisfied. On my entering the Poet's study, I said to him, "The Hunts have effected a lodgment in your palace;" and I was thinking how different must have been his emotion on the arrival of the Hunts from that triumphant morning after the publication of "Childe Harold," when he "awoke and found himself famous."

Usually meeting him after two or three days'

absence his eyes glistened; now they were dull and his brow pale. He said,

"I offered you those rooms. Why did you not take them? Have you seen Hunt?"

"Not this morning," I replied; "he is in labour for an article in the new Review."

Byron said,

"It will be an abortion. I shall have nothing to do with it. Gifford and Jeffrey will run him down as you say Shelley's boat was run down. Why did not he stick to the 'Examiner?' He is in Italy, but his mind is in Hampstead, Highgate, and Covent Garden."

When I took my leave he followed me into the passage, and patting the bull-dog on the head he said, "Don't let any Cockneys pass this way."

Byron could not realize till the actual experiment was tried the nuisancè of having a man with a sick wife and seven disorderly children interrupting his solitude and his ordinary customs, and then Hunt did not conceal that his estimate of Byron's poetry was not exalted. At that time Hunt thought highly of his own poetry and under-estimated all other, as is the wont of the literary guilds. Shelley he

thought would have made a great poet if he had written on intelligible subjects. He was smitten with the old rhymesters' quaintness, punning, and playing battledore and shuttlecock with words. Shelley soared too high for him and Byron flew too near the ground. There was not a single subject on which Byron and Hunt could agree.

CHAPTER XI.

Alas! what is life, what is death, what are we,
That when the ship sinks, we no longer may be?

SHELLEY.

SHELLEY, with his friend Williams, soon came in their boat, scudding into the harbour of Leghorn. They went with the Hunts to Pisa, and established them in Lord Byron's palace, Shelley having furnished a floor there for them. In a few days Shelley returned to Leghorn, and found Williams eager to be off. We had a sail outside the port in the two boats. Shelley was in a mournful mood; his mind depressed by a recent interview with Byron.

Byron, at first, had been more eager than Shelley for Leigh Hunt's arrival in Italy to edit and contribute to the proposed new Review, and so continued until his English correspondents had worked on his fears. They did not oppose, for they knew his

temper too well, but artfully insinuated that he was jeopardizing his fame and fortune, &c., &c., &c. Shelley found Byron irritable whilst talking with him on the fulfilment of his promises with regard to Leigh Hunt. This was doomed to be their last meeting.

On Saturday, the 6th, Williams wrote the following letter to his wife at the Villa Magni:—

I HAVE just left the quay, my dearest girl, and the wind blows right across to Spezzia, which adds to the vexation I feel at being unable to leave this place. For my own part, I should have been with you in all probability on Wednesday evening, but I have been kept day after day waiting for Shelley's definitive arrangements with Lord B. relative to poor Hunt, whom, in my opinion, he has treated vilely. A letter from Mary, of the most gloomy kind, reached S. yesterday, and this mood of hers aggravated my uneasiness to see you; for I am proud, dear girl, beyond words to express, in the conviction, that *wherever* we may be together you could be cheerful and contented.

Would I could take the present gale by the

wings and reach you to-night; hard as it blows, I would venture across for *such* a reward. However, to-morrow something decisive shall take place; and if I am detained, I shall depart in a felucca, and leave the boat to be brought round in company with Trelawny in the "Bolivar." He talks of visiting Spezzia again in a few days. I am tired to death of waiting—this is our longest separation, and seems a year to me. Absence alone is enough to make me anxious, and indeed unhappy; but I think if I had left you in our own house in solitude, I should feel it less than I do now.—What can I do? Poor S. desires that I should return to you, but I know secretly wishes me not to leave him in the lurch. He too, by his manner, is as anxious to see you almost as I could be, but the interests of poor H. keep him here;—in fact, with Lord B. it appears they cannot do anything,—who actually said as much as that he did not wish(?) his name to be attached to the work, and of course to theirs.

In Lord Byron's family all is confusion;—the cut-throats he is so desirous to have about him, have involved him in a second row; and although the present banishment of the Gambas from Tuscany

is attributed to the first affair of the dragoon, the continued disturbances among his and their servants is, I am sure, the principal cause for its being carried into immediate effect. Four days (commencing from the day of our arrival at Leghorn) were only given them to find another retreat; and as Lord B. considers this a personal, though tacit attack upon himself, he chooses to follow their fortunes in another country. Genoa was first selected,—of that government they could have no hope;—Geneva was then proposed, and this proved as bad if not worse. Lucca is now the choice, and Trelawny was despatched last night to feel their way with the governor, to whom he carried letters. All this time Hunt is shuffled off from day to day, and now heaven knows when or how it will end.

Lord B.'s reception of Mrs. H. was—as S. tells me—most shameful. She came into his house sick, and exhausted, and he scarcely deigned to notice her; was silent, and scarcely bowed. This conduct cut H. to the soul; but the way in which he received our friend Roberts, at Dunn's door, shall be described when we meet:—it must be acted. How I long to see you; I had written *when*, but I will

make no promises, for I too well know how distressing it is to both of us to break them. Tuesday evening at furthest, unless kept by the weather, I *will* say, "Oh, Jane! how fervently I press you and our little ones to my heart."

Adieu!—Take body and soul; for you are at once my heaven and earth;—that is all I ask of both.

E. Elk. W—.

S. is at Pisa, and will write to-night to me.

The last entry in Williams's Journal is dated July 4, 1822, Leghorn:—

Processions of priests and religiosi have been for several days past praying for rain: but the gods are either angry, or nature too powerful.

The affair of the dragoon alluded to in Williams's letter, as connected with the Gambas, was this:—As Byron and his companions were returning to Pisa on horseback, the road being blocked up by the party,—a serjeant-major on duty in their rear trotted his horse through the cavalcade. One of the awkward literary squad,—a resolute bore, but

timid rider,—was nearly spilt, from his nag shying. To divert the jeers from his own bad riding, he appealed pathetically to Byron, saying:—

"Shall we endure this man's insolence?"

Byron said:—"No, we will bring him to an account;" and instantly galloped after the dragoon into Pisa, his party following. The guard at the gate turned out with drawn swords, but could not stop them. Some of the servants of Byron and the Gambas were idling on the steps of his palace; getting a glimpse of the row, one of them armed himself with a stable-fork, rushed at the dragoon as he passed Byron's palace, and wounded him severely in the side. This scene was acted in broad daylight on the Lung' Arno, the most public place in the city, scores of people looking on! yet the police, with their host of spies and backed by the power of a despotic government, could never ascertain who struck the blow.

Not liking to meddle with the Poet, they imprisoned two of his servants, and exiled the family of Count Gamba. Byron chose to follow them. Such is the hatred of the Italians to their rulers and all who have authority over them, that the blind

beggars at the corners of the streets,—no others were permitted to beg in Tuscany,—hearing that the English were without arms, sidled up to some of them, adroitly putting into their hands formidable stilettos, which they had concealed in the sleeves of their ragged gaberdines.

Shelley wrote me the following note about the dragoon:—

My dear T.,

Gamba is with me, and we are drawing up a paper demanded of us by the police. Mary tells me that you have an account from Lord Byron of the affair, and we wish to see it before ours is concluded. The man is severely wounded in the side, and his life is supposed to be in danger from the weapon having grazed the liver. It were as well if you could come here, as we shall decide on no statement without you.

Ever yours truly,

Shelley.

Mrs. Shelley, writing an account of the row, says:—

"Madame G. and I happened to be in the carriage, ten paces behind, and saw the whole. Taaffe kept at a safe distance during the fray, but fearing the consequence, he wrote such a report that Lord Byron quarrelled with him; and what between insolence and abject humility he has kept himself in hot water, when, in fact, he had nothing to fear."

Here is a letter—the last—addressed to Shelley by Mrs. Williams:—

July 6th.

My Dearest Friend,

Your few melancholy lines have indeed cast your own visionary veil over a countenance that was animated with the hope of seeing you return with far different tidings. We heard yesterday that you had left Leghorn in company with the "Bolivar," and would assuredly be here in the morning at five o'clock; therefore I got up, and from the terrace saw (or I dreamt it) the "Bolivar" opposite in the offing. She hoisted more sail, and went through the Straits. What can this mean? Hope and uncertainty have made such a chaos in my mind that I know not what to think. My own Neddino does not deign

to lighten my darkness by a single word. Surely I shall see him to-night. Perhaps, too, you are with him. Well, *pazienza!*

Mary, I am happy to tell you, goes on well; she talks of going to Pisa, and indeed your poor friends seem to require all her assistance. For me, alas! I can only offer sympathy, and my fervent wishes that a brighter cloud may soon dispel the present gloom. I hope much from the air of Pisa for Mrs. Hunt.

Lord B.'s departure gives me pleasure, for whatever may be the present difficulties and disappointments, they are small to what you would have suffered had he remained with you. This I say in the spirit of prophecy, so gather consolation from it.

I have only time left to scrawl you a hasty adieu, and am

Affectionately yours,

J. W.

Why do you talk of never enjoying moments like the past? Are you going to join your friend Plato, or do you expect I shall do so soon? *Buona notte.*

P. B. SHELLEY, Esq.,
Ferma in Posta,
Pisa.

On Monday, the 8th of July, 1822, I went with Shelley to his bankers, and then to a store. It was past one P.M. when we went on board our respective boats,—Shelley and Williams to return to their home in the Gulf of Spezzia; I in the "Bolivar," to accompany them into the offing. When we were under weigh, the guard-boat boarded us to overhaul our papers. I had not got my port clearance, the captain of the port having refused to give it to the mate, as I had often gone out without. The officer of the Health Office consequently threatened me with fourteen days' quarantine. It was hopeless to think of detaining my friends. Williams had been for days fretting and fuming to be off; they had no time to spare, it was past two o'clock, and there was very little wind.

Sullenly and reluctantly I re-anchored, furled my sails, and with a ship's glass watched the progress of my friends' boat. My Genoese mate observed,—"They should have sailed this morning at three or four A.M., instead of three P.M. They are standing too much in shore; the current will set them there."

I said, "They will soon have the land-breeze."

"May-be," continued the mate, "she will soon have too much breeze; that gaff topsail is foolish in a boat with no deck and no sailor on board." Then pointing to the S.W., "Look at those black lines and the dirty rags hanging on them out of the sky—they are a warning; look at the smoke on the water; the devil is brewing mischief."

There was a sea-fog, in which Shelley's boat was soon after enveloped, and we saw nothing more of her.

Although the sun was obscured by mists, it was oppressively sultry. There was not a breath of air in the harbour. The heaviness of the atmosphere and an unwonted stillness benumbed my senses. I went down into the cabin and sank into a slumber. I was roused up by a noise over-head and went on deck. The men were getting up a chain cable to let go another anchor. There was a general stir amongst the shipping; shifting berths, getting down yards and masts, veering out cables, hauling in of hawsers, letting go anchors, hailing from the ships and quays, boats sculling rapidly to and fro. It was almost dark, although only half-past six o'clock. The sea was of the colour, and looked as

solid and smooth as a sheet of lead, and covered with an oily scum. Gusts of wind swept over without ruffling it, and big drops of rain fell on its surface, rebounding, as if they could not penetrate it. There was a commotion in the air, made up of many threatening sounds, coming upon us from the sea. Fishing-craft and coasting vessels under bare poles rushed by us in shoals, running foul of the ships in the harbour. As yet the din and hubbub was that made by men, but their shrill pipings were suddenly silenced by the crashing voice of a thunder squall that burst right over our heads. For some time no other sounds were to be heard than the thunder, wind, and rain. When the fury of the storm, which did not last for more than twenty minutes, had abated, and the horizon was in some degree cleared, I looked to seaward anxiously, in the hope of descrying Shelley's boat, amongst the many small craft scattered about. I watched every speck that loomed on the horizon, thinking that they would have borne up on their return to the port, as all the other boats that had gone out in the same direction had done.

I sent our Genoese mate on board some of the

[illegible] pro-
[illegible] So
[illegible] assistance to
[illegible] stranger,
[illegible] to a long
[illegible] days.
[illegible] see another in
[illegible] hastens
[illegible] a word is
[illegible] resume my
[illegible] dark.
[illegible] was gusty and showery, and
[illegible] coast: at daylight I
[illegible] examinations of
[illegible] which had returned
[illegible] They either knew
[illegible] My Genoese, with
[illegible] pointed out, on board a
[illegible] that he thought
[illegible] Shelley's boat, but the
[illegible] saints in the
[illegible] Another day was
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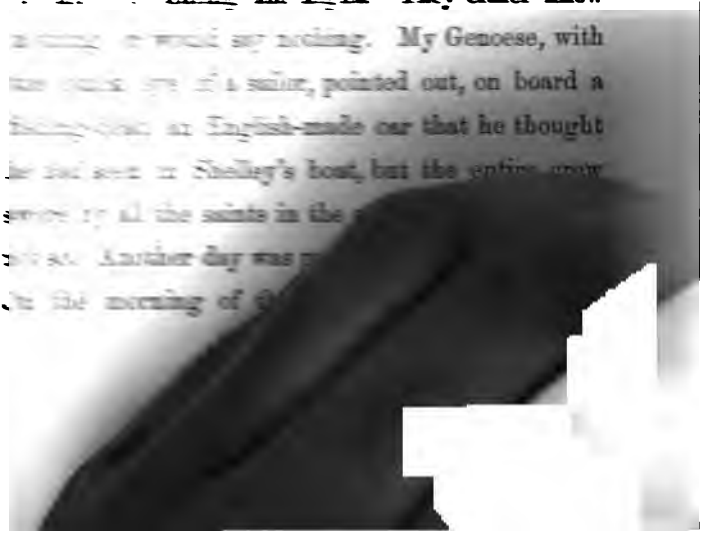

Byron had returned to the Lanfranchi Palace. I hoped to find a letter from the Villa Magni: there was none. I told my fears to Hunt, and then went upstairs to Byron. When I told him, his lip quivered, and his voice faltered as he questioned me. I sent a courier to Leghorn to despatch the "Bolivar" to cruise along the coast, whilst I mounted my horse and rode in the same direction. I also despatched a courier along the coast to go as far as Nice. On my arrival at Via Reggio I heard that a punt, a water-keg, and some bottles had been found on the beach. These things I recognized as having been in Shelley's boat when he left Leghorn. Nothing more was found for seven or eight days, during which time of painful suspense I patrolled the coast with the coast-guard, stimulating them to keep a good look-out by the promise of a reward. It was not until many days after this that my worst fears were confirmed. Two bodies were found on the shore,—one near Via Reggio, which I went and examined. The face and hands, and parts of the body not protected by the dress, were fleshless. The tall slight figure, the jacket, the volume of Æschylus in one pocket, and Keats's poems in the

other, doubled back, as if the reader, in the act of reading, had hastily thrust it away, were all too familiar to me to leave a doubt on my mind that this mutilated corpse was any other than Shelley's. The other body was washed on shore three miles distant from Shelley's, near the tower of Migliarino, at the Bocca Lericcio. I went there at once. This corpse was much more mutilated; it had no other covering than,—the shreds of a shirt, and that partly drawn over the head, as if the wearer had been in the act of taking it off,—a black silk handkerchief, tied sailor-fashion round the neck,—socks, —and one boot, indicating also that he had attempted to strip. The flesh, sinews, and muscles hung about in rags, like the shirt, exposing the ribs and bones. I had brought with me from Shelley's house a boot of Williams's, and this exactly matched the one the corpse had on. That, and the handkerchief, satisfied me that it was the body of Shelley's comrade. Williams was the only one of the three who could swim, and it is probable he was the last survivor. It is likewise possible, as he had a watch and money, and was better dressed than the others, that his body might have been plundered

when found. Shelley always declared that in case of wreck he would vanish instantly, and not imperil valuable lives by permitting others to aid in saving his, which he looked upon as valueless. It was not until three weeks after the wreck of the boat that a third body was found—four miles from the other two. This I concluded to be that of the sailor boy, Charles Vivian, although it was a mere skeleton, and impossible to be identified. It was buried in the sand, above the reach of the waves. I mounted my horse, and rode to the Gulf of Spezzia, put up my horse and walked until I caught sight of the lone house on the sea-shore in which Shelley and Williams had dwelt, and where their widows still lived. Hitherto in my frequent visits —in the absence of direct evidence to the contrary —I had buoyed up their spirits by maintaining that it was not impossible but that the friends still lived; now I had to extinguish the last hope of these forlorn women. I had ridden fast, to prevent any ruder messenger from bursting in upon them. As I stood on the threshold of their house, the bearer, or rather confirmer, of news which would rack every fibre of their quivering frames to the

utmost, I paused, and, looking at the sea, my memory reverted to our joyous parting only a few days before.

The two families, then, had all been in the verandah, overhanging a sea so clear and calm that every star was reflected on the water, as if it had been a mirror; the young mothers singing some merry tune, with the accompaniment of a guitar. Shelley's shrill laugh—I heard it still—rang in my ears, with Williams's friendly hail, the general *buona notte* of all the joyous party, and the earnest entreaty to me to return as soon as possible, and not to forget the commissions they had severally given me. I was in a small boat beneath them, slowly rowing myself on board the "Bolivar," at anchor in the bay, loth to part from what I verily believed to have been at that time the most united, and happiest, set of human beings in the whole world. And now by the blow of an idle puff of wind the scene was changed. Such is human happiness.

My reverie was broken by a shriek from the nurse Caterina, as, crossing the hall, she saw me in the doorway. After asking her a few questions, I went up the stairs, and, unannounced, entered the

room. I neither spoke, nor did they question me. Mrs. Shelley's large grey eyes were fixed on my face. I turned away. Unable to bear this horrid silence, with a convulsive effort she exclaimed—

"Is there no hope?"

I did not answer, but left the room, and sent the servant with the children to them. The next day I prevailed on them to return with me to Pisa. The misery of that night and the journey of the next day, and of many days and nights that followed, I can neither describe nor forget. It was ultimately determined by those most interested that Shelley's remains should be removed from where they lay, and conveyed to Rome, to be interred near the bodies of his child, and of his friend Keats, with a suitable monument, and that Williams's remains should be taken to England. To do this, in their then far advanced state of decomposition, and to obviate the obstacles offered by the quarantine laws, the ancient custom of burning and reducing the body to ashes was suggested. I wrote to our minister at Florence, Dawkins, on the subject, and solicited his friendly

intercession with the Lucchese and Florentine governments, that I might be furnished with authority to accomplish our purpose.

The following was his answer;—

Dear Sir,

An order was sent yesterday from hence to the Governor of Via Reggio, to deliver up the remains of Mr. Shelley to you, or any person empowered by you to receive them.

I said they were to be removed to Leghorn for interment, but that need not bind you. If they go by sea, the governor will give you the papers necessary to insure their admittance elsewhere. If they travel by land, they must be accompanied by a guard as far as the frontier—a precaution always taken to prevent the possibility of infection. Quicklime has been thrown into the graves, as is usual in similar cases.

With respect to the removal of the other corpse, I can tell you nothing till I hear from Florence. I applied for the order as soon as I received your letter, and I expect an answer to my letter by to-morrow's post.

I am very sensible of Lord Byron's kindness, and should have called upon him when I passed through Pisa, had he been anybody but Lord Byron. Do not mention trouble; I am here to take as much as my countrymen think proper to give me; and all I ask in return is fair play and good humour, which I am sure I shall always find in the S. S. S.

Believe me, dear sir,

Yours very faithfully,

W. DAWKINS.

Such were his subsequent influence and energy, that he ultimately overcame all the obstacles and repugnance of the Italians to sanction such an unprecedented proceeding in their territories.

What was the real cause of the catastrophe whereby Shelley and Williams came to their end? I shall here insert without further comment the correspondence which took place on this subject, beginning, towards the end of 1875, with a letter from my daughter. The several communications were published towards their respective dates in the "Times."

Rome, Nov. 22, 1875.

My dear Father,

I have just heard something that will interest you. A little while ago there died at Spezzia an old sailor who, in his last confessions to the priest (whom he told to make it public), stated that he was one of the crew that ran down the boat containing Shelley and Williams, which was done under the impression that the rich "milord Byron" was on board with lots of money.

They did not intend to sink the boat, but to board her and murder Byron. She sank, he said, as soon as she was struck.

This account was sent to my friends the K——s by a person they are intimate with, and who lives at Spezzia, and, I believe, knows the priest.

My comment on the above letter was as follows:—

"This account so exactly corresponds with the event that I think it solves that which for half a century has been a mystery to me and others."

To the Editor of the "Times."

SIR,

With reference to the recent letters and comments which have appeared regarding the death of Shelley in connection with the story of the fisherman, as related by Miss Trelawny, I think it right to clear up, as far as seems practicable, the present mystification which surrounds it. This seems to be all the more necessary in the interests of truth since the publication in the "Times," on the 24th of December, of the letter from Professor de Gubernatoris (quoted from the "Athenæum"), wherein the whole story is treated as the canard of some "wag of a sailor." A perusal of the following particulars will, perhaps, better enable your readers to judge for themselves on which side probability leans. In May of the present year I chanced to be on a visit in a charming villa overlooking the Bay of Spezzia, and the romantic spot where Shelley spent the last few months of his life. Guided by my hostess, who is an old friend of the Shelley family, I made a morning pilgrimage to the Poet's former abode, and, having recently stood on the very shore where

his body was discovered and consumed by flames, I naturally questioned my companion regarding such particulars of the tragical tale as might have come to her knowledge from her intimacy with the family, and it was with intense interest that I then listened to the story of the fisherman, of which a somewhat garbled version has now appeared in print.

The old fisherman died so far back as 1863, and appears to have made no particular secret on his deathbed of the crime that weighed on his conscience; and as his name seems to have been withheld by the priest to whom allusion has been made, there would appear to have been no "betrayal of the confessional" in the case; indeed, the very fact of the story having transpired may be accepted as proof that it was but the overflowing of the dying man's conscience to all who were around him. The priest confided what had thus come to his knowledge to an Italian noble residing in the vicinity, who was known to be on terms of intimacy with the deceased Poet's friends, and by him it was made known to my informant for a similar reason. She forthwith communicated it to "the person most interested," who seems to have refrained from pub-

licity; and meanwhile the old noble has died, and the mention of his name would serve no useful purpose. But it seems evident that neither he nor the priest could have had any possible motive in concocting such a story some forty years after the Poet's death, when all excitement on the subject had ceased; and to those conversant with the actual facts of the disaster it will seem like a revelation of the probable truth. It should not be forgotten that Mr. Trelawny, after a careful investigation on the spot, came to the conclusion that there had been foul play. The boat wherein Shelley sailed was evidently not capsized, but run down by another craft. I will now give the story itself in the very words of my friend:—

"A boatman dying near Sarzana, confessed, about twelve years ago, that he was one of five who, seeing the English boat in great danger, ran her down, thinking milord Inglese was on board, and they should find gold."

My informant has resided during the last twenty years in the neighbourhood of Spezzia, and has always placed entire faith in the truth of the above. But it has crept into the papers without my agency,

although I am responsible for having mentioned it as an interesting anecdote to some friend of the Trelawny family in Rome, and I have obtained the permission of my original informant to offer this explanation. I enclose my card, and should my name be considered of any consequence, I place it at your disposal, although it seems quite immaterial to the object in view.

Yours faithfully,

V. E.

Rome, December 28th, 1875.

To the Editor of the "Times."

SIR,

When I received the news from Rome of an old sailor at Spezzia having confessed he was one of the crew of the felucca who ran down Shelley's boat, I believed it, and do so still, as it exactly corresponded with the event. The Italian fishing feluccas on that part of the coast are long, low, heavy-decked vessels, carrying from seven to ten men, lateen sails, sharp in the bows, and very fast sailers. Shelley's was an undecked open boat, schooner rigged. She was so light that she had three tons and a half of iron ballast

to bring her down to her bearings. At midday on the 8th of July, 1822, Shelley came from his banker's at Leghorn with a canvas bag full of Tuscan crown pieces. Byron, Shelley, Williams, and myself could not be distinguished by the sailors at the harbour, and Byron's and Shelley's boats had their sails loose ready for sea. It was a light land breeze when we weighed our anchors and started at two P.M. I was on board Byron's boat, and was hailed at the entrance of the harbour by the captain of the port, asking if I had my port clearances and bill of health. On my answering I had not, that I was going to return that night, he replied that I should be put in quarantine. I was therefore obliged to re-anchor, and Shelley's boat proceeded alone. Two feluccas went out of port at the same time, in the same direction as Shelley's boat. I remained on board. Some hour after the squall came on; the wind and the sea mist veiled everything from sight at any distance, and the first thing we saw was several feluccas returning for refuge into the harbour.

When the first vessel anchored I sent a mate on board of her, a Genoese, to see what tidings he could get of Shelley's boat. The crew declared they had

seen nothing of her. The Genoese said, "Why, there are some of her spars on board you," pointing to an English oar, "that belongs to her." This they all denied. On his reporting the circumstance to me, he expressed his suspicions that they knew more than they would acknowledge. I thought that we should know more the next day. If I had reported to the captain of the port what the Genoese said, their vessel would have been put in quarantine for fourteen days. That restrained me. I had no suspicion at that time of the disaster which had happened, and the light spars of Shelley's boat might have been thrown overboard. Hearing nothing for several days I became alarmed; but everything was conjecture. I then rode along the coast line to Via Reggio, and collected evidence that Shelley's boat had been wrecked. At length the bodies of the crew were found, and every effort was made to detect where the boat had sunk. After a course of dredging she was found in ten fathoms water, about two miles off the coast of Via Reggio. The cause of her loss was then evident. Her starboard quarter was stove in, evidently by a blow from the sharp bows of a felucca; and, as I have

said, being undecked and having three tons and a half of iron ballast, she would have sunk in two minutes. Had she been decked it would have been otherwise. So that the man in his confession saying that "the moment they struck she went down," impressed me with the truth of his revelation. That this had been her fate had been the general opinion of the Spezzia dockyard authorities and of all who saw her. The Italian professor's endeavour to exculpate his countrymen is patriotic. We English are not so credulous; we are better acquainted with Italy and the Italians than they are with us. And whom is there to hoax about an occurrence which has never been commented upon, which happened two generations ago, and in which few persons are interested?

Yours obediently,

E. J. TRELAWNY.

Sompting, near Worthing,
Dec. 27th, 1875.

CHAPTER XII.

All things that we love and cherish,
Like ourselves, must fade and perish;
Such is our rude mortal lot;
Love itself would, did they not.

SHELLEY.

I GOT a furnace made at Leghorn, of iron-bars and strong sheet-iron, supported on a stand, and laid in a stock of fuel, and such things as were said to be used by Shelley's much loved Hellenes on their funeral pyres.

On the 13th of August, 1822, I went on board the "Bolivar," with an English acquaintance, having written to Byron and Hunt to say I would send them word when everything was ready, as they wished to be present. I had previously engaged two large feluccas, with drags and tackling, to go before, and endeavour to find the place where Shelley's boat had foundered; the captain of one of

the feluccas having asserted that he was out in the fatal squall, and had seen Shelley's boat go down off Via Reggio, with all sail set. With light and fitful breezes we were eleven hours reaching our destination—the tower of Migliarino, at the Bocca Lericcio, in the Tuscan States. There was a village there, and about two miles from that place Williams was buried. So I anchored, landed, called on the officer in command, a major, and told him my object in coming, of which he was already apprised by his own government. He assured me I should have every aid from him. As it was too late in the day to commence operations, we went to the only inn in the place, and I wrote to Byron to be with us next day at noon. The major sent my letter to Pisa by a dragoon, and made arrangements for the next day. In the morning he was with us early, and gave me a note from Byron, to say he would join us as near noon as he could. At ten we went on board the commandant's boat, with a squad of soldiers in working dresses, armed with mattocks and spades, an officer of the quarantine service, and some of his crew. They had their peculiar tools, so fashioned as to do their work

without coming into personal contact with things that might be infectious—long-handled tongs, nippers, poles with iron hooks and spikes, and divers others that gave one a lively idea of the implements of torture devised by the holy inquisitors. Thus freighted, we started, my own boat following with the furnace, and the things I had brought from Leghorn. We pulled along the shore for some distance, and landed at a line of strong posts and railings which projected into the sea—forming the boundary dividing the Tuscan and Lucchese States. We walked along the shore to the grave, where Byron and Hunt soon joined us; they, too, had an officer and soldiers from the tower of Migliarino, an officer of the Health Office, and some dismounted dragoons, so we were surrounded by soldiers; but they kept the ground clear, and readily lent their aid. There was a considerable gathering of spectators from the neighbourhood, and many ladies richly dressed were amongst them. The spot where the body lay was marked by the gnarled root of a pine tree.

A rude hut, built of young pine-tree stems, and wattled with their branches, to keep the sun and

rain out, and thatched with reeds, stood on the beach to shelter the look-out man on duty. A few yards from this was the grave, which we commenced opening—the Gulf of Spezzia and Leghorn at equal distances of twenty-two miles from us. As to fuel I might have saved myself the trouble of bringing any, for there was an ample supply of broken spars and planks cast on the shore from wrecks, besides the fallen and decaying timber in a stunted pine forest close at hand. The soldiers collected fuel whilst I erected the furnace, and then the men of the Health Office set to work, shovelling away the sand which covered the body, while we gathered round, watching anxiously. The first indication of their having found the body was the appearance of the end of a black silk handkerchief—I grubbed this out with a stick, for we were not allowed to touch anything with our hands—then some shreds of linen were met with, and a boot with the bone of the leg and the foot in it. On the removal of a layer of brushwood, all that now remained of my lost friend was exposed—a shapeless mass of bones and flesh. The limbs separated from the trunk on being touched.

"Is that a human body?" exclaimed Byron; "why, it 's more like the carcass of a sheep, or any other animal, than a man: this is a satire on our pride and folly."

I pointed to the letters E. E. W. on the black silk handkerchief.

Byron looking on, muttered, "The entrails of a worm hold together longer than the potter's clay of which man is made. Hold! let me see the jaw," he added, as they were removing the skull, "I can recognize any one by the teeth, with whom I have talked. I always watch the lips and mouth: they tell what the tongue and eyes try to conceal."

I had a boot of Williams's with me; it exactly corresponded with the one found in the grave. The remains were removed piecemeal into the furnace.

"Don't repeat this with me," said Byron; "let my carcass rot where it falls."

The funereal pyre was now ready; I applied the fire, and the materials being dry and resinous the pine-wood burnt furiously, and drove us back. It was hot enough before, there was no breath of air, and the loose sand scorched our feet. As soon as the flames became clear, and allowed us to

approach, we threw frankincense and salt into the furnace, and poured a flask of wine and oil over the body. The Greek oration was omitted, for we had lost our Hellenic bard. It was now so insufferably hot that the officers and soldiers were all seeking shade.

"Let us try the strength of these waters that drowned our friends," said Byron, with his usual audacity. "How far out do you think they were when their boat sank?"

"If you don't wish to be put into the furnace, you had better not try; you are not in condition."

He stripped, and went into the water, and so did I and my companion. Before we got a mile out, Byron was sick, and persuaded to return to the shore. My companion, too, was seized with cramp, and reached the land by my aid. At four o'clock the funereal pyre burnt low, and when we uncovered the furnace, nothing remained in it but dark-coloured ashes, with fragments of the larger bones. Poles were now put under the red-hot furnace, and it was gradually cooled in the sea. I gathered together the human ashes, and placed them in a small oak-box, bearing an inscription on

a brass plate, screwed it down, and placed it in Byron's carriage. He returned with Hunt to Pisa, promising to be with us on the following day at Via Reggio. I returned with my party in the same way we came, and supped and slept at the inn. On the following morning we went on board the same boats, with the same things and party, and rowed down the little river near Via Reggio to the sea, pulled along the coast towards Massa, then landed, and began our preparations as before.[1]

Three white wands had been stuck in the sand to mark the Poet's grave, but as they were at some distance from each other, we had to cut a trench thirty yards in length, in the line of the sticks, to ascertain the exact spot, and it was nearly an hour before we came upon the grave.

In the meantime Byron and Leigh Hunt arrived in the carriage, attended by soldiers, and the Health Officer, as before. The lonely and grand scenery that surrounded us so exactly harmonized with Shelley's genius, that I could imagine his spirit soaring over us. The sea, with the islands of

[1] For an account of the cremation of Shelley, written down by me at the time, see the Appendix.

Gorgona, Capraja, and Elba, was before us; old battlemented watch-towers stretched along the coast, backed by the marble-crested Apennines glistening in the sun, picturesque from their diversified outlines, and not a human dwelling was in sight. As I thought of the delight Shelley felt in such scenes of loneliness and grandeur whilst living, I felt we were no better than a herd of wolves or a pack of wild dogs, in tearing out his battered and naked body from the pure yellow sand that lay so lightly over it, to drag him back to the light of day; but the dead have no voice, nor had I power to check the sacrilege—the work went on silently in the deep and unresisting sand, not a word was spoken, for the Italians have a touch of sentiment, and their feelings are easily excited into sympathy. Byron was silent and thoughtful. We were startled and drawn together by a dull hollow sound that followed the blow of a mattock; the iron had struck a skull, and the body was soon uncovered. Lime had been strewn on it; this, or decomposition, had the effect of staining it of a dark and ghastly indigo colour. Byron asked me to preserve the skull for him; but remembering that he had formerly used

one as a drinking-cup, I was determined Shelley's should not be so profaned. The limbs did not separate from the trunk, as in the case of Williams's body, so that the corpse was removed entire into the furnace. I had taken the precaution of having more and larger pieces of timber, in consequence of my experience of the day before of the difficulty of consuming a corpse in the open air with our apparatus. After the fire was well kindled we repeated the ceremony of the previous day; and more wine was poured over Shelley's dead body than he had consumed during his life. This with the oil and salt made the yellow flames glisten and quiver. The heat from the sun and fire was so intense that the atmosphere was tremulous and wavy. The corpse fell open and the heart was laid bare. The frontal bone of the skull, where it had been struck with the mattock, fell off; and, as the back of the head rested on the red-hot bottom bars of the furnace, the brains literally seethed, bubbled, and boiled as in a cauldron, for a very long time.

Byron could not face this scene, he withdrew to the beach and swam off to the "Bolivar." Leigh Hunt remained in the carriage. The fire was so

THE BURNING OF SHELLEY'S BODY NEAR VIAREGGIO, A.D. 1822.

fierce as to produce a white heat on the iron, and to reduce its contents to grey ashes. The only portions that were not consumed were some fragments of bones, the jaw, and the skull; but what surprised us all was that the heart remained entire. In snatching this relic from the fiery furnace, my hand was severely burnt; and had any one seen me do the act I should have been put into quarantine.

After cooling the iron machine in the sea, I collected the human ashes and placed them in a box, which I took on board the "Bolivar." Byron and Hunt retraced their steps to their home, and the officers and soldiers returned to their quarters. I liberally rewarded the men for the admirable manner in which they behaved during the two days they had been with us.

As I undertook and executed this novel ceremony, I have been thus tediously minute in describing it. A sage critic remarks that I performed this cremation in a bungling manner, that I should have used a gas retort. My answer is that neither gas nor retorts were then known in Italy. He further remarks that bodies washed on shore were obliged to be burnt; that is an error. Bodies

washed on shore were buried in the sand above the wash of the sea, and as the Inquisition no longer burnt heretics, I followed the practice of the Hindoos in using a funeral pyre.

In all cases of death from suffocation the heart is gorged with blood; consequently it is the more difficult to consume, especially in the open air.

Byron's idle talk during the exhumation of Williams's remains did not proceed from want of feeling, but from his anxiety to conceal what he felt from others. When confined to his bed and racked by spasms, which threatened his life, I have heard him talk in a much more unorthodox fashion, the instant he could muster breath to banter. He had been taught during his town-life that any exhibition of sympathy or feeling was maudlin and unmanly, and that the appearance of daring and indifference denoted blood and high breeding.

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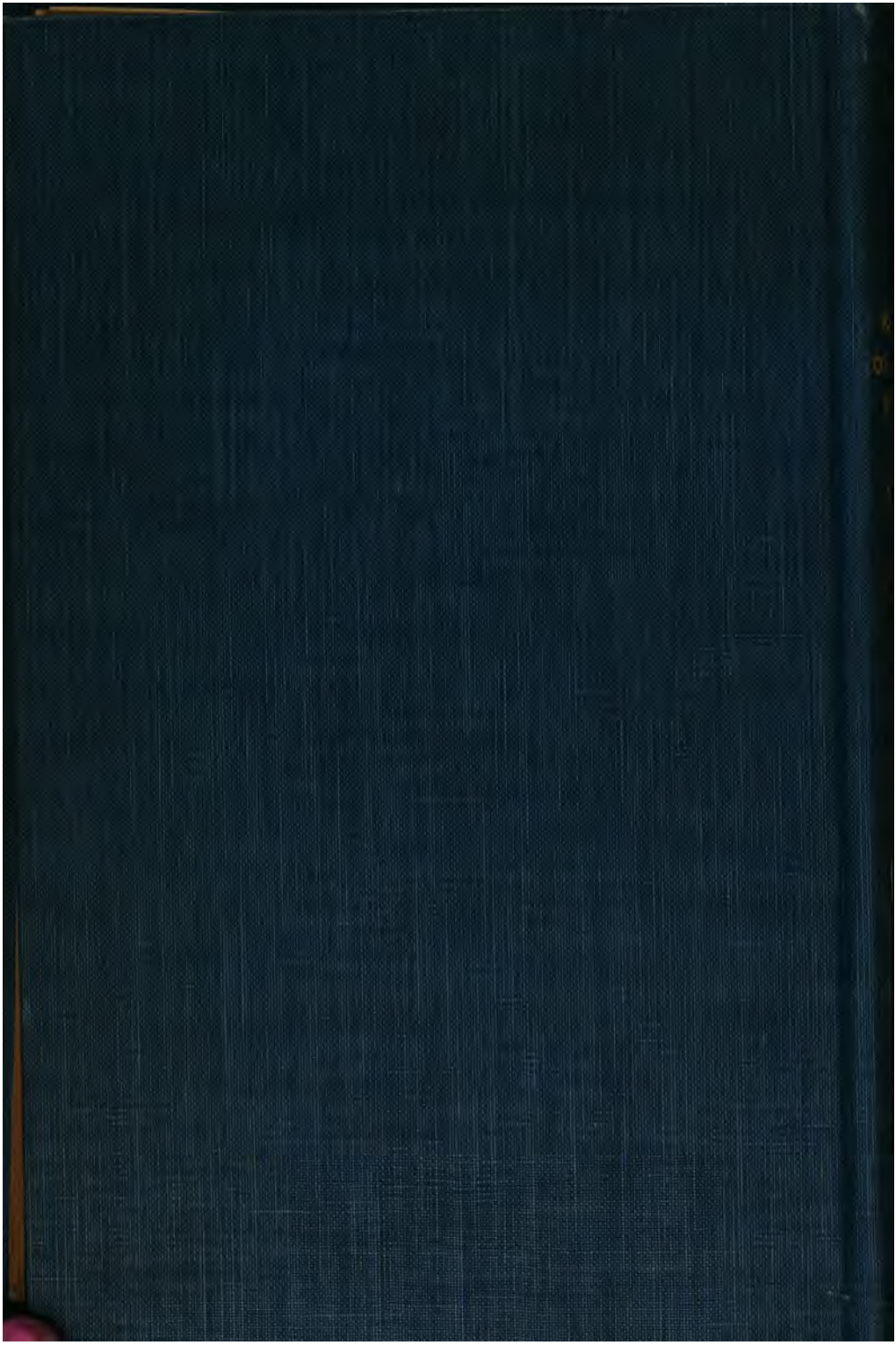
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